

THE CHRISTIAN EPIC

Mary Ely Lyman

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THE CHRISTIAN EPIC

BY MARY ELY LYMAN

THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND THE LIFE OF TODAY

(Under name of Mary Redington Ely)

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN JOHANNINE THOUGHT

PAUL THE CONQUEROR

The Christian Epic

A STUDY OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE

By

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TO
MY SISTER
CAROLINE DENISON ELY

PREFACE

THERE are already many books about the New Testament, but I shall not offer apology for writing another. The richness of this literature is the justification for many different approaches to it and many attempts to interpret it. My work in the New Testament with college and seminary classes and church groups has made me feel the need for the kind of study that I have undertaken in this volume. But back of that incentive is the perennial meaning of the New Testament writings for our life and faith.

The phrase "The Christian Epic" which I have taken for the title of the book is borrowed from Santayana's *The Life of Reason*, where it serves as the title of the chapter dealing with the transformation of the Jewish philosophy of history into what he calls "the Christian dream." That I have used the phrase in a quite different sense will be evident to those who read the book.

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As this volume has been in preparation I have thought with gratitude of many—both teachers and students—in whose fellowship the study of the New Testament has become for me a vital and quickening experience. I

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should like to thank them all, but the list is too long for entry here. There are two, however, to whom my thanks must be made explicit: to Professor James Everett Frame of Union Theological Seminary, New York, who first revealed to me the fascination of this field of study, and to my husband, Eugene William Lyman, whose counsel, encouragement, and criticism have undergirded the entire enterprise.

MARY ELY LYMAN.

Union Theological Seminary, New York,
February 1936

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AN APPROACH TO THE STUDY

THE purpose of this study is partly historical and partly appreciative. It tells the story of the rise of the New Testament literature, taking the writings in the order in which they arose, thus seeing them, as they are, a vivid expression of life. When these writings are followed in this way, in the order of their growth, and as a record of the dynamic faith of the Christian community in its early years, they take on new significance for us. To see them as a reflection of life that was actually being lived, as literature in whose production persons of varying temperaments, gifts and experiences shared is to enter into them with fresh perception. To realize their relationship to a living, growing movement, is to feel anew their vitality and power.

In tracing the course of this story much has been taken for granted. The results of historical and critical study have been freely drawn upon, often without indication of the intricacy of the problems involved. The purpose that has controlled the writing has been to show how the literature developed, first in fragmentary form, as diary, as memoirs, as collections of stories and teachings, and later as integral works such as we find in the New Testament today. To view the New Testament in this way is to see it as literature waiting upon life.

In the second place the study has been prompted by the desire to appreciate these writings as literature; to press

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certain questions regarding their effectiveness and perennial vitality; to discover if possible something of the secret of their unquenchable fire. What did these writers feel that they have so quickened us to feeling? What analysis may be made of their skill in handling the medium through which they brought their feelings to expression?

These two quests are intimately related to each other. Certain conditions of life, certain modes of experience were governing in the production of these religious writings that gave them their kindling power. That modern readers respond so fully and spontaneously to these writings of so remote a past is the truest testimony to the power of their authors to perceive what the heart of religion is and to express their intuitions in authentic form. What situations in the life of the community or of the individuals tended to bring this power into being; what are the factors which make the expression so timeless in its effectiveness?—this is the twofold search of this study.

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CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE New Testament starts from the life of a single person, Jesus of Nazareth, a prophetic teacher of religion in the regions of Galilee and Judea during the period of the Roman domination of Palestine. The faith of his countrymen had been put to severe trial in the long years of their subjugation to other nations, and now they were restive under even this comparatively lenient rule of Rome. Foreign domination had always been peculiarly distasteful to the Hebrews because their religious faith was so bound up with their national consciousness. They believed that they were a people of divine destiny and that in their national life God had a special instrument for the expression of His will. His kingdom was to be realized through them, and hence, in its frustration of this central religious hope, the loss of political autonomy had peculiar irksomeness for them.

The days of Israel's isolation were now long since past. Alexander's conquest had brought the Hebrew people into the stream of commercial and political world-organization, and now three centuries later, under Rome, the problems of their political and cultural life were mainly centered about the Hebrews' relationship to the foreigners within their gates. The social groupings of Jesus' day, such as the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Zealots, and the

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Essenes, all found their reason for being in some problem,—whether political, religious, or economic,—of the relationship between Jew and Gentile. Some, like the Pharisees, tried to solve this problem by retreating into an intense devotion to the past,—to the Hebrew law both in its oral and written form. They were following the example, though in less extreme fashion, of those who, in the time of the Maccabean struggle, had preferred to die rather than to relinquish their historic faith.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, were more hospitably inclined toward the benefits of western civilization. The hateful elements of Roman rule,—taxation, the census, the abuses of the Herodian princes,—were all subordinated in their thought to the goods which came from the cultural resources of their alien neighbors,—their games and festivals, their trade and industry, and their building enterprises. The Sadducees sought to insure the well-being of Hebrew national life through some kind of favorable adjustment to their foreign rulers.

Another group, the Zealots, stood for aggressive resistance to any encroachment upon the autonomous life of the Hebrews. Their rallying cry reveals the intensity of their feeling: "No Lord but Jehovah; no tax but the Temple tax; no friend but the Zealot!" Zealots and other militant groups were constantly on the verge of revolt, and the culmination of this method of dealing with the problem of overlordship came in the Jewish War which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus in 70 A.D.

Still another way of dealing with the need for adjustment to foreign influence was taken by the Essenes, who withdrew into a community life, religious in spirit, ascetic in practice, holding thus a complete aloofness from the

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changes that the new culture was bringing about. Other groups less significant than these met the problem in their own ways, but in whatever form the adjustment was worked out, it is clear that the paramount problem of Jesus' day was the relation of the Hebrews to Roman rule, and its effect upon that most precious possession of Hebrew life, its cultural and religious autonomy.

Jesus' life was lived when this problem of adjustment was pressing heavily upon his people. Other teachers of religion were also bringing their thought to bear upon the situation, counselling one or another way of dealing with it. One of them, John the Baptizer, with his reaffirmation of the ethical message of Hebrew prophetism had a considerable influence upon Jesus. But more than John and more than all the others, Jesus, both in his teaching and in his personality, took hold upon his own generation, and has influenced all generations since. He did not deal directly with the central problem of his people's relationship to Rome, preferring that they should render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, because in so doing they were free to render to God the things that were God's. To him the important issues lay in the spiritual life of his people, an attitude which had been characteristic of the best leadership of Israel's past. Like the greatest of the earlier religious leaders, the prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries, Jesus counselled the seeking of God's kingdom in the ethical life and the life of religious fellowship.

Out of the vast store of religious thought and practice which was his heritage from Israel's past, he made free selection. Bound by no set traditions or formulas, he criticized and discarded freely, brushing aside trivialities, ignoring what had only local and temporary significance,

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and thrusting deep into the unchanging interests of the religious life. Through his uniquely graphic teaching, these principles took on new life and appeal; and through his power of identifying himself completely with his message, the religious values for which he stood gained the winsomeness of the personality itself. The ardor of his prophetism, together with his creative ways of dealing with people, brought new life into a troubled age. Minds and bodies that had been circumscribed found release in him. In the popular following that surrounded him, there was a real access of power. Enthusiasm tended to replace the prevailing legalism in religion. His teaching about the imminence of the kingdom, which had found its text in the phrase of John the Baptist, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand," had convinced many that he was indeed the fulfillment of the ancient hope for a leader who should usher in the reign of God on earth. Many found in their hearts an echo to Peter's declaration, "Thou art the Christ!"

Opposition to Jesus on the part of the religious authorities came as a result of popular misunderstanding regarding his teaching about the kingdom. This opposition, gathering momentum partly because of its bearing upon the central issue of the time,—the relation of the Jews to Rome,—had its outcome in his death. The tragic frustration of the hope which his followers had entertained about him is revealed in the reported words of the men on the way to Emmaus, "concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." "The chief priests and our rulers," they said, "delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we hoped that it was he who

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should redeem Israel" (Luke 24:20-21). He had embodied in his personality and teaching so much of their idealism about messiahship that they had come to feel that the end of oppression and the beginning of their glory were near. But his death on the cross could not be harmonized with their notions about the ideal leader, and the enthusiasm that had centered in him was quickly transformed to grief and a sense of defeated hope.

But this initial despair gave way in its turn to a triumphant certainty that Jesus was alive and that he would return to them speedily. A popular school of writing which had been current during the preceding decades had been fond of picturing a Messiah whose reign would be initiated by a descent from heaven, and these well-known literary presentations doubtless had their effect upon their imaginings about the way in which Jesus would return. But more potent, and far more momentous, were certain experiences of the presence of Jesus after his death which came both to individuals and to groups. These experiences convinced his disciples that he was alive and that his work must go on through them, with his spirit guiding and inspiring them. The exact nature of these experiences it is not possible to determine, since the records exhibit great variety at this point, and reveal patently that the processes of legendary accretion have been at work. But even though we lack full knowledge of the processes that brought it about, we can be sure that the conviction of his continued life came to them and that it was central and determining in the historical processes that made the developing Christian community.

The creativeness that had marked the life of Jesus be-

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came now to a surprising degree the possession of the group that followed him. Not only did they teach with authority as he had done, but they worked with heightened energy and lived their common life with an intense devotion to the religious ideal which in their thought was centered in the personality of Jesus. There had been a real newness in the relationship that Jesus himself had sustained to the religion of his fathers, a newness that had come not through any break with the past, but through his selectiveness and freedom in the handling of the historic faith, and through the gifts of his personality as teacher and leader. Now in the group that was united after his death by their common allegiance to him and to his teaching, there was also a strong sense of newness, springing from the fact that his personality rather than the ancient law had become the focus for both their thinking and their practice in religion. It was intensified also by the fact that before two decades had passed, the movement had begun to transcend the boundaries of race and geography and make an appeal to Gentiles as well as to Jews.

Gradually at first, and later more aggressively and swiftly through the work of Paul, the separateness of this little group from Judaism came to make itself felt. Quite possibly their early thought of being a group by themselves would have defined itself in terms of the prophetic idea of a "remnant," which should appropriate most fully the values of the kingdom. But in the transition from a Jewish to a Hellenistic background, there emerged in the group itself a self-consciousness, a recognition that they were no longer merely a part of Judaism. Correspondingly on the part of their contemporaries there came to be

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an acceptance of them as "Christians," a term which probably had in its first usage a tinge of derision, but which grew in time to be their accepted designation.

Some of the reasons for the rapid growth of the movement in the first three centuries were external,—such as the active work of individuals like Paul, Barnabas, and other early missionaries; the facility in transportation and the communication of ideas which the organization of the Roman world afforded; the uprising of the Jews against Rome which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and forced the religious life of Palestine out of its natural geographical confines and compelled it to live, if it survived at all, in relation to the culture of the Gentile world. All these contributed to the spread of the Christian message in the Roman Empire.

But many of the reasons for the movement's swift gain in numbers and in strength were inward. Some of them lay in the spiritual conditions of the Roman world,—the absence of any strong prevailing faith, either national or universal; the already established tendency toward syncretism; the spiritual hunger of the times which Paul recognized as characteristic of the Athenians when he said to them on Mars Hill, "Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious" (Acts 17:22). But most of all, the secret of the extraordinary growth of the movement must be sought in its own inner qualities:—its enthusiasm, its freshness, its flexibility and adaptability to the varied conditions of life that it found in the Roman Empire.

Judaism with its central body of legal formulation, and with its philosophy of nationalism was destined always to remain a thing apart in any other culture. Some adapta-

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tions of course took place in the Jewish colonies in the Hellenistic world, notably in Alexandria where some earnest efforts at harmonizing Judaism with Greek philosophy were put forth. Philo of Alexandria was the most skilled and the most zealous worker in this field. But despite these attempts, Judaism by its very nature was incapable of a true assimilation to any other culture than its own.

With the Christian movement, however, the situation was quite other. Here was an interpretation of life that was centered in the teaching and example of a person. It had, to be sure, its close genetic relationship to Judaism, but Jesus had been freely selective as he took from Judaism those aspects of its faith and practice that had seemed to him vital to true religion. In the community that followed him, spontaneity and freshness were part and parcel of its newness, of its being unfettered by the formal bonds of an established religion. Enthusiasm for a person replaced allegiance to the law. The freedom and discrimination which had characterized Jesus' own treatment of his religious heritage became in them freedom in assimilating and in adapting to the elements of the new world culture which surrounded them. Eager expectation of the return of Jesus brought urgency into their missionary efforts. The story of the life of the Christian community in the first three centuries is one of extraordinary vitality in the processes of adjustment to the elements of the new culture in which it lived. We shall see in our examination of the New Testament how the philosophy, the religion, the social and political thinking of the Hellenistic society were all drawn upon, selectively, in the building of the thought and practices of the Christian movement.

This adaptation to the new world, however, did not go on without conflict or retardation. It is a familiar story, how the conservative party tried to hold back the processes of assimilation and maintain conformity to Jewish thought and custom. The earlier writings of the New Testament are full of this conflict between the forces of liberalism and those that stood for adherence to the past. A dynamic enthusiasm in such a clash of cultures must play a vigorous rôle to maintain its own survival; the Christian group was equal to this demand.

But before the end of the period covered by the New Testament writings, this conflict with conservative Jewish opinion was exchanged for problems that had to do with the definition of the faith and practice of Christianity in order to hold in check an adaptiveness so free as to endanger its distinctive character. Heresy and insubordination to authority arose and compelled a definition of the orthodox content of belief and of the rights and duties of constituted leadership. And already before the end of the New Testament period, the question had arisen as to which of the Christian writings should have a place alongside those that had come down out of the Hebrew past. The very nature of these later questions and problems shows how completely the major adjustment to the new world had been made. For many religious movements the demands of such a situation would have been too much, but the Christian group had at its center an enthusiasm sufficiently vital to carry it through. It survived by reason of its inner strength, and conversely, it won strength through the very processes of survival.

The writings that make up the New Testament are one of the fruits of this vigor of life. As we seek to picture

the background of these remarkably vital records, we must think of little groups of persons living their life almost unnoticed in the various centers of the Roman Empire. Their leaders were not professional literary men. They did not participate in the literary gatherings of the time. No rich patrons adopted them, as was the case for the Latin writers of this age. But life was a momentous thing to these men: they wrote with power. And while their writings made no stir in the literary circles of their own society, they have come down through the ages and have influenced the thought of generation after generation of men. Time has not dimmed their freshness or made antiquated their messages of hope and comfort, their records of aspiration after the good life.

The chronicle of the writings is simple. It begins with a few collections of Jesus' words, and stories of his works, made lest the pungent sayings and the characteristic ways of the great teacher become less vivid in memory, as those who knew him best scattered, and later died. Next came a bundle of letters from a remarkable leader, Paul of Tarsus, who had found an interpretation of life through Jesus, and who was trying to share it with groups of friends with whom, for the most part, he had already talked and worked. Then, following upon the death of that other leader, Peter, whose great gift to the group had been the vivid memory of his companionship with Jesus, there came certain attempts at a fuller record of the doings and sayings of the Master. Three of these records,—“gospels” they were called because they told the “good news,”—won circulation and were cherished so that they became part of the literary treasure of the church. They incorporated some of the earlier and simpler records, but

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each had its own individuality, as it was addressed to the needs and problems of a given locality.

Other writings followed as other needs arose. To complete this chronicle of the life of Jesus there appeared a story of the beginnings of the movement and the missionary activity of Paul. There were also messages of exhortation to the good life, of which the book of James is an example. There were messages of comfort, in time of persecution, urging steadfastness when life was going hard with the group. First Peter, Hebrews, and Revelation all came from times like these. Tracts, like Jude and Second Peter, dealt with the problems of heretical-teaching. When problems of church order presented themselves, there came messages that attempted formulation on such points, like the Pastoral letters. And one book which is called a gospel is really a record of mystical experience told through the medium of a story of Jesus' life. This gospel of John and the letters which are closely allied to it were consciously attempting to present the religion which centered in Jesus in such a form that it would be understandable and attractive to those in the Græco-Roman world who were more philosophically minded.

A small body of writings it is, covering no great range in time, and offering no great variety in literary type. Gospel and chronicle, epistle, and apocalypse, homily and exhortation,—this is the range. Where are the collections of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:16) which Paul admonished them to use, "singing with grace in their hearts unto God"? Where are the prayers which they must have used in their common worship? One has been preserved in full, the one which is called "the Lord's prayer," and a few fragments of others. But more

there must have been, and liturgies or formulas which accompanied the sacraments, about which the records tell so little.

Slight in amount, showing surprising omissions in content, leaving much unsaid, about which we long to know, still this group of writings is a priceless treasure. As historical data, they are the precious firsthand source materials for the most significant religious movement in history, and for the life from which it sprang. As literature they have that rare vitality and eternal applicability to life that we call the "classic quality." As reservoirs of inspiration for the religious life, they have maintained their place through the ages, and men have found in them perennially "words of eternal life."

CHAPTER II

THE EARLIEST RECORDS—"Q"

THE men and women who made up the early Christian society were for the most part people who were living very ordinary lives in the cities and towns of the Roman Empire. Few of them, we believe, were distinguished in the society of that day by outstanding gifts of personality or by conspicuous services in the community. Few of them had more than the common educational advantages that the time afforded, and certainly some had less than the average. A considerable number of them were in economic circumstances which compelled them to keep hard at the business of making a living. They were ordinary people living quite ordinary lives.

But these not unusual people made up a society of extraordinary distinction. There were many Gentile religious societies and a number of Jewish sects in the Roman world in the first century A.D. Most of them flourished for a time, and died. But the Christian group increased in numbers and formed the beginning of a movement so powerful that it has lived on until today. In the fourth century Christianity became the official religion of the Roman State, and it has come down through history, the dominant religious movement of the west. Humble people growing up from childhood into maturity, earning their living in ordinary ways, falling in love and marrying,

bringing children into the world, suffering the anxieties and depressions of family and business life, experiencing its joys and satisfactions, and in countless other ways, accepting the common lot of humanity,—these ordinary human folk made up a religious movement of such strength and such distinction that it has molded all succeeding history.

Our knowledge of this group in the first few decades after Jesus' death is meagre. The only chronicle we have of the first years—the early chapters of Acts—is obviously a record pieced together from bits of popular tradition, sometimes duplicating its own narratives, and showing clearly the exaggerations and inconsistencies that creep into oft-told tales. But even if we do not know with certainty the details of their external life, there are certain inner qualities of their group life of which we can be sure. Behind the childlike tales of vision and voice from heaven, of flaming tongues of fire and a rushing mighty wind, of a man and woman struck down to death from full health, and of miraculous releases from prison and danger, we can discern a fervor of belief and a passion of devotion that distinguishes the common life of these early Christians.

They believed themselves to be part of a divine enterprise. God had revealed Himself to them in Jesus. Speedily Jesus was to return to them and their partnership in the divine plan would be revealed in its fullness. In this they were only accepting a dominant scheme of thought of their time. Apocalyptic thinking, a current literary and religious tradition, promised a speedy end of the world, which should bring with it reward for the faithful and punishment for the wicked. In adapting this popular

mode of thought to their own uses, the Christians identified the imminent close of history, promised by the apocalyptists, with the return of Jesus. Only those nourished in this powerful religious tradition could have cherished so eagerly and expectantly a second coming of their leader which would close the divine drama of history.

A sense of the momentousness of their life permeated all their doings and transformed their group life into a spiritual community. But as the vista on life lengthened with the years and compelled a more complete adjustment to this present world and its problems, the high fervor and ecstasy of the first years necessarily yielded to a more settled régime. Regulation of the community took the place of individual feeling, and public opinion replaced vision and voice as a guide to conduct. But even in the variation from the early days that such regulation entailed, there was always present in their common experience a unique quality, a belief that the Holy Spirit was among them making them a more than human society. Their words and their works were made powerful through the working of the Spirit in them. Because of this living presence in their midst, they had an inner strength and independence which no outer circumstances could subdue.

We read in Paul's letter of "diversities of gifts" which were theirs through the workings of the Spirit. By the Spirit they were moved to prophesy, to teach, and to heal, but nowhere do we read of the Spirit's leading them to write. The processes by which the Christian group entered upon the business of authorship must have been gradual and well-nigh unconscious, and we might have concluded that there were no writings previous to Paul's

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letters, were it not for the fact that the gospels which we now possess bear such clear testimony to earlier writings, upon which they depend.

There are many points of difference in the thought of New Testament scholars about the form and the content of these earlier documents upon which our gospels depend, but the belief that there were earlier written records has practically universal acceptance. Just as it has become clear through the comparison of the three synoptic gospels with one another that Mark is the earliest of the three, and is the one upon which the other two depend, so scholars have come to feel sure of another body of written material from which Matthew and Luke have drawn much of that part of their record which was not supplied to them by Mark. There is less certainty, however, as to details in this case, because the early material has not survived in its original form. The symbol "*Q*" (the initial letter of the German word for source, "*Quelle*") has been so generally accepted as the designation for this material that we now speak of "*Q*" almost as readily as we do of Matthew, Mark or Luke, though not of course with the same certainty as to its exact denotation.

There is indeed no certainty about the exact nature and content of *Q*. We do not know, for example, whether *Q* was a single document or many, whether it was originally written in Aramaic or in Greek, whether Matthew and Luke used the same or differing versions, nor what exactly *Q* contained. It is helpful in this connection to think of how precisely these same questions would have faced us regarding Mark and its use by Matthew and Luke, had we not been so fortunate as to possess Mark itself. Only

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the presence of the earlier document itself could have shown us how the two later gospels used it. And so in the case of *Q*, where the earlier material has not survived, there must remain areas in which only conjecture is possible, unless some new discovery brings earlier writings to light. Where Matthew and Luke agree perfectly, as they sometimes do, in passages not found in Mark, we can have practically complete certainty about the form of *Q* at that point, but the areas of uncertainty come in where they have used the same source differently.

With all the questions, however, that arise about *Q*, there has come to be a fair amount of agreement about certain passages which it probably contained. Among such passages, most would include the following:

The story of the ministry of John the Baptist.

The story of the baptism and temptation of Jesus.

The story of the cure of the centurion's son (or servant).

The discussion about casting out demons by Beelzebub.

Of the teachings of Jesus:

the beatitudes,

sayings about the new law of the Kingdom, and its contrast with the old law,

certain parables:

the lost sheep,

the talents (or pounds),

the great supper (or marriage feast),

the mustard seed,

instructions to the disciples, including the teachings about prayer, worry, fortitude, etc.,

warnings and woes against the Pharisees,

short epigrammatic sayings with figures of speech about salt, lamps, lilies, sparrows, the mote and beam etc.

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Although it will be noted that the larger part of the material in this list is teaching that Jesus gave rather than story about his doings, this is not exclusively so. As Moffatt has said of the units described by Papias as "λόγια": "Many of the Lord's most striking words were associated with some event or incident. When they were plucked from the soil of the ἀγραφος μνήμη (unwritten memory) in the primitive tradition, they would come up with some historical details of time and place clinging to them like earth to the roots of a plant."¹ Undoubtedly, however, the greatest interest of this earliest written record was to preserve and make available to the church the teaching which was its rule of life. And these teaching interests provided the first motive for "taking in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters" which centered about the great Teacher.

As we try to imagine the circumstances which brought these early writings into being, we must think again of the actual experience of the Christian community in the decades between Jesus' death and the writing of our first gospel, Mark. In the first years the accounts of Jesus, the rehearsal of his teachings, would go on by word of mouth. Just as stories of Hebrew heroes and the words of prophets, sages, and lawmakers were read by the Jewish communities in their synagogues, so the Christian congregations would bring their memories of Jesus into their common worship, and rehearse both his sayings and his deeds. The extraordinary retentiveness of the Semitic memory made possible a far more literally accurate telling of his parables and sayings than modern westerners would think possible. The poetic form of many of the sayings, following as they

¹ Moffatt: *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, p. 189.

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often do the laws of Semitic parallelism, was also an aid to the memory.²

We can imagine the repetition of the balanced phrases to a listening group:

Give to him that asketh thee,
and from him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not
away.

Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek,
turn to him the other also.

If any man would go to law with thee,
and take away thy coat,
let him have thy cloak also.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth,
where moth and rust consume,
and where thieves break through and steal:
but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven
where neither moth nor rust doth consume,
and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

With what measure ye mete,
it shall be measured unto you.

Judge not,
that ye be not judged.

These sayings, and others like them, concrete and definite as they were in their prescription of a mode of life, came to be used in the early Christian communities alongside the Law and the Prophets as a sort of second scripture.

At first there was no need for a written record, for groups were small and the memories more nearly the

² Burney: *The Poetry of Our Lord*, pp. 137-140.

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common possession of all who made them up. But as months and years went on, and new groups were formed, and the vividness of recollection suffered the inevitable blunting of time, the necessity for committing the story to writing became apparent. As Professor Cadbury has pointed out, it seems impossible to trace in our present possession of *Q*, as it comes to us through the gospels, any one organizing mind behind it, any one definite guiding principle of selection which brought its various elements together.³ It seems more true to the material as it stands to think of it as the common possession and treasure of a group, gradually assembling itself into a collection by the natural processes of usage as teaching.

Perhaps different localities had their own stores of tradition, and possibly combinations of two or more early collections had already been made before the authors of our present gospels make use of this *Q* material in building a consecutive narrative of Jesus' life and teaching.⁴

There is a vast significance for those who use the New Testament today in the results of study on the beginnings of the gospel story. Here is the assurance that our records about Jesus go back to an early date. Here is testimony to the fact that the recollections of Jesus' teaching were taking shape in written form while the memories of the great Teacher were fresh, and while they were still a common possession of a group. Early meetings in which the memories of the words and works of Jesus were orally shared were the background of the earliest written records.

³ Cadbury: *The Making of Luke-Acts*, p. 108.

⁴ Canon Streeter and others think of the *Q* material used by Luke as having gone through this kind of treatment. "Proto-Luke" according to Streeter was a document which represented "a stage between *Q* in its original form, and the third gospel, a *Q L* which was itself 'a kind of gospel.'" See Streeter: *The Four Gospels*.

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And the records, artless and simple as they were, were the beginnings of our present gospels.

There is assurance of the authenticity of our present record in the early date at which the tradition was committed to writing, but there is even greater assurance that comes from the inherent nature of the material itself. Here in this *Q* material is a prophetic fervor, an insight and penetration into life which convinces us that we are in possession of the Master's own words. The sayings show the intensity and passion of prophetic experience, as in the record of the temptation of Jesus, and the intuitive understanding of life that is the possession of genius. Long experience of generations of men attests the truth of the pithy sayings that *Q* contained. Universal human life is summed up in them, but only the intuitive power of religious genius could have brought them to such perfect expression.

He that findeth his life shall lose it;
and he that loseth his life shall find it.

Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled;
and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Whosoever hath, to him shall be given;
but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even
that which he thinketh he hath.

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be.

The limitless view of the religious obligation which these sayings present is again an authentic mark of genius. No barriers can be tolerated in the life of religion. Its obligations are limitless.

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Give to everyone that asketh thee.

Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek
turn to him the other also.

Love your enemies
and pray for them that persecute you.

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto
you,
even so do ye also unto them.

Part of the appeal of these sayings lies in this boundless sweep of their thought. "*Everyone* that asketh thee," "*whosoever* smiteth thee," "*all* things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you"—there are no boundaries to the ideal that underlies these sayings. It is all-inclusive. On the thought side, there is great attractiveness here, but on the practical side it might have made for unreality unless there had been great simplicity and concreteness of expression. But actually, even so limitless an ideal becomes attractive and seems realizable through the tangibility of the commands. They are linked to the everyday experience of every man's life:

If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye?

Judge not that ye be not judged.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him.

This linking of the boundless ideal with the compassable real in everyday experience reveals the power of genius behind the sayings.

Again we feel the greatness of the sayings in their inevitable linking of ethics with religion. The kingdom of God is the central concept of their teaching. The ethical commands are given for those who would be part of the family of God. Men are to be merciful because their Father in heaven is merciful. In prayer, men are to address God as Father. The good life of obedience to the moral requirements of the kingdom is equivalent to doing the will of the Father. The tenderest human relationships are called up to mind, and then are shown to be only slight in comparison to the relationships of the kingdom. It is to a life of religious devotion as well as to high ethical achievement that these teachings call.

In these great qualities of interpretation both of ethics and of religion, we find assurance that these are authentic words of Jesus. They are the qualities that come only from a great religious genius. Genius reveals itself also in the qualities of expression that distinguish these sayings. As one reads any such reconstruction of *Q* as Harnack has afforded us in his *Sayings of Jesus*, one is struck afresh with the matchless power of giving life to thought that it presents.

The imagery of the sayings is sometimes very simple, but its effectiveness is high because it bears such close relationship to life.

If the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Ye are the salt of the earth.

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The tree is known by its fruit. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

The lamp on the lamp-stand, the blind leading the blind, the narrow gateway, contrasted with the broad highway, the laborers of the harvest, the house built on a rock, two sparrows sold for a farthing, a reed shaken in the wind, children in the market place playing on their pipes for their playmates' dancing, birds and their nests, the tiny seed of the mustard tree,—all these are figures drawn from the common and humble aspects of man's life.

But sometimes the imagery assumes a bolder contour. The figures through which the temptation experience of Jesus is related are an instance. A picture of the devil, taking Jesus to Jerusalem, setting him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and commanding him to display his sonship to God by casting himself down to the ground is a powerful figuring forth of the subtle attraction of spectacular methods of work. This high imaginative power is shown also in the saying about the Son of man:

If therefore they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the wilderness; go not forth:

Behold, he is in the inner chambers, believe it not.

For as the lightning cometh forth from the east,

and is seen even unto the west;

so shall be the coming of the Son of man.

Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

When the woes are uttered against the cities, the powerful poetry of prophetic utterance is here:

And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades.

Vigor of thought, true insight into life, prophetic passion expressing itself in trenchant speech,—all these qualities of Jesus' teaching have been preserved to us in this earliest record of his work. Lost to us now as a separate work, but forming an essential component in each of the larger writings, Matthew and Luke, *Q* is one of the priceless treasures of the Christian heritage. It is easy to see why it was not preserved as a separate work after it had been incorporated in the larger gospels, but because we do not have it now as an entity by itself, it should not be forgotten that we owe an immeasurable debt to this early record which preserved so faithfully, not only the vital emphases of Jesus' teaching, but the prophetic fire of his utterance.

CHAPTER III

THE LETTERS OF PAUL

THE earliest New Testament writings which have come down to us in their original form are the letters of Paul. We noted in the preceding chapter that the first written accounts of Jesus and his teaching were not the result of conscious planning for the future, but were produced in response to immediate community needs. This was as true of Paul's letters as it was of *Q*. That these messages of his should become scripture for future ages was, we may well imagine, the furthest from Paul's thought about them. How he himself regarded them is suggested in the opening sentences of the letter to the Romans. After the salutation "to all that are in Rome" and his words of thanksgiving for them, and of his hope to visit Rome, he says, "for I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established." The message which follows serves to answer temporarily that longing, as well as to prepare for the visit which was to come later.

It is thus that we should think of his letters which we know under the somewhat formal-sounding titles given them by the compilers of the New Testament. To him they represented no attempt at a complete exposition of his religious faith. They were, rather, the eager expres-

sion of his loving interest in his friends, of his yearning to supply to them the leadership that was his to give, and of his faith that for them as for him, the life that was hid with Christ in God meant freedom and joy. Before the close of the New Testament period they were referred to by a Christian writer as "scripture" (II Peter 3:16), and in all the ages since, they have been so regarded; but we may be sure that their author never guessed that it would be so.

It is the interest of this study to examine the letters to discover if we may the qualities they possess which have made them so far transcend their author's expectations that they have served as expressions of religious feeling for all succeeding generations of Christians. It will not therefore be necessary to repeat here the oft-told story of Paul's missionary activity nor to re-examine what has been so ably set forth in other volumes,—the history of these letters as they pertain to the developing life of the Christian church. What interests us here is their character as they now stand. Some of those who opposed Paul in his own day made comments that show how powerful the letters were, how they exceeded in effectiveness even what he was able to do with the spoken word:

For his letters, they say, are weighty and strong; but his bodily presence is weak. (II Cor. 10:10)

Those who made this comparison were not wishing to suggest the judgment upon the letters which subsequent religious history has given them,—that they are indeed classics in religious literature. But the judgment of history prompts us to ask: what is the quality in these letters that made them so "weighty and strong"?

Since we shall have occasion later to deal with a number of other letters in the New Testament, besides those of Paul, it is well to take account of the fact that the letter was not a new literary form in Paul's day. Other important series of letters have come down to us from this period or near it, Cicero's and Pliny's letters, the Imperial rescripts which carried the official business of the Empire between the capital city and the provinces, and other important and interesting series of communications. Lately also the papyri, buried treasure newly brought to light, have revealed to us the more informal communications that passed between person and person when opportunity offered. Among these a beautiful little letter from the philosopher, Epicurus, written in the third century B.C. to a child of his acquaintance shows us that the letter had even at that time come into use for very simple and informal messages. The letter reads:

We have arrived in health at Lampsacus, myself and Hermarchus and Ctesippus, and there we have found Themistas and the rest of the friends in health. It is good if you are also in health and your grandmother, and obey your grandfather and Matron in all things as you have done before. For be sure, the reason why both I and all the rest love you so much is that you obey these in all things.¹

Both travel and letter-writing had been made easy by the peaceful organization and administration of the Roman Empire. The Imperial post, to be sure, undertook no business of carrying other than the official communications of the Empire, but its example and the protection of

¹ Milligan: *Selections from the Greek Papyri*, p. 5. For other interesting Greek and Roman letters consult Brooke: *Private Letters Pagan and Christian*.

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the roads which its existence entailed made common the practice of sending and receiving letters, as individual travellers made their way from city to city. Paul was but seizing upon a practice already established when he asked Tychicus, Epaphroditus, and others to bear his messages with them as they travelled. But he was undoubtedly making a more constant and more skillful use of this practice than any other individual of his time.

In the matter of the structure of his letters, he was also accepting the practice of his day. We find that most of the letters which have survived from that period used as he did the opening greeting, which often included a prayer for the health and prosperity of the one addressed or some word of thanksgiving for his friendship. Most of them followed the main news or message which the letter brought with a greeting from friends, or with closing prayers and valedictions, similar in form at least to those employed by Paul.

Into this common form, however, Paul poured a content of rare significance and strength. As the artist in making a painting or a statue draws on all the funded experience that life has given him, so the Apostle, using this common medium, drew on a rich store of both personality and experience. Endowed by nature with gifts that are rarely united in one personality, he was both the man of feeling and the man of action, both mystic and organizer. Sharing by reason of his Jewish inheritance, his Roman citizenship, and his upbringing in a Greek city, in the three dominant cultures of his day, he brought to his missionary career an unusual breadth of experience. So intense in his participation in religion that no middle ground was possible for him between the rôle of chief antagonist of the

Christian movement and that of chief protagonist, his genius fulfilled itself in a missionary career of great energy and skillful strategy. His tireless activity in travel, his enlistment of friends as coadjutors, his letters,—all were implements made to serve the ends of his controlling purpose, that they should all “attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”

Of the ten letters which are commonly held to be Paul's, the earliest group, *I and II Thessalonians* and *Galatians*, were probably written on his second missionary journey. The group of his converts at Thessalonica needed reassurance of his claims to leadership; they needed help and encouragement for maintaining the strong moral position which Paul advocated as a vital part of the Christian life; and most of all they were in perplexity about Paul's teaching regarding the second coming of Jesus. Some of their number had died, and apprehension had arisen lest death deprive them of the joys of the new age. Paul's letters confirm their faith in his leadership by reviewing his relations with them, and make a glowing appeal to them to “build each other up” in the moral life. On the last of these problems Paul's own thought had not matured. Even when full allowance has been made for the figurative use of apocalyptic language,² the picture of the return of Jesus which the first Thessalonian letter gives represents a too simple acceptance of current Jewish apocalyptic conceptions.

Even though these letters to the community at Thessalonica do not show the spiritual power of Paul's later writing, they have excellence of another sort. They carry some passages of unforgettable beauty, lines expressive of Paul's

² Raven: *Jesus and the Gospel of Love*, p. 309.

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tender feeling for his friends and of his urgent concern for their welfare:

For ye are our glory and our joy. (I Thes. 2:20)

We dealt with each of you as a father with his own children. (I Thes. 2:11)

Now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord. (I Thes. 3:8)

Ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day:
we are not of the night, nor of darkness. (I Thes. 5:5)

Let us, since we are of the day, be sober,
putting on the breastplate of faith and love;
and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. (I Thes. 5:8)

The *Galatian letter* is an immeasurably greater work. It directs itself to the major crisis in the history of the early church, the relation of the new movement to Judaism, and handles this difficult issue with such clarity and firmness that it may rightly be estimated a classic expression of Christian liberty. Arguing for the freedom of the new faith against those who contended that accepting Jewish ceremonialism was a prerequisite for becoming a Christian, Paul has uttered here some of his greatest contributions to Christian thinking.

For freedom did Christ set us free. (Gal. 5:1)

There can be neither Jew nor Greek,
there can be neither bond nor free,
there can be no male and female,
for all ye are one man in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28)

If we live by the Spirit,
by the Spirit let us also walk. (Gal. 5:25)

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For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love. (Gal. 5:6)

This letter is also rich in its revelation of the inner life of Paul. Not only in the autobiographical section in the first two chapters, but in incidental ways throughout, the letter reveals intimately the spiritual experience of its author.

Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus. (Gal. 6:17)

Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (Gal. 6:14)

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me. (Gal. 2:20)

The long residence in Ephesus which constituted the major part of what is commonly called the third missionary journey afforded opportunity for almost constant communication with the Christian group in Corinth, the great cosmopolitan center across the Ægean Sea. Probably the letter to the Roman Church was also written during this stay in Ephesus. The writings which now bear the titles *First* and *Second Corinthians*, were, we think, not originally merely two letters. They seem rather to be compilations of several letters or portions of letters,—perhaps three, perhaps four,—which were sent by Paul across

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the Ægean to the community whose growth in Christian experience he was so eagerly following and fostering.

In this correspondence Paul was working out with the Corinthian Christians some of the problems of adjustment which were presented by the complex life in this metropolitan area. For the Corinthians, questions had arisen not so much about their relationship to a Jewish past, but about their adjustment to a many-sided present culture in which both philosophy and religion had a vital place. Here the moral demands of Christianity were a central issue, because life in the city of Corinth was unstable, full of excess, and beset with problems for thoughtful people. The letters which Paul wrote to his Corinthian friends reveal how many and how difficult were the problems with which he had to deal. Indirectly they also show the immaturity, the laxness, and often the perverseness with which Paul had to deal in guiding the Corinthian group. On the other hand, one realizes through them that this group had a deep affection for their leader, and an eagerness for his guidance that endears them to us.

We shall have more to say later of Paul's judgment in sifting out the trivial phases of the problems which the Corinthians had presented to him, and of his skill in giving central issues significant expression; but here it is important for us to note how his liberalism finds its focus in a theological principle which for him is central to religion.

He that judgeth me is the Lord. (I Cor. 4:4)

Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (II Cor. 3:17)

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Moral problems must for him always come to solution through the recognition that the Spirit, or the indwelling Christ, is a higher arbiter than any external code. This was the central point of Paul's religious experience and of his Christian teaching.

Paul's pastoral gifts are also clearly shown in this correspondence with the Corinthians. He is affectionate and remarkably patient in dealing with their quarrels, their superstitions, their instabilities, and their childishness. His pain is intense when they fail him:

Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be made sorry, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly toward you. (II Cor. 2:4)

His joy is great when they advance:

I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you. (II Cor. 7:16)

Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying on your behalf: I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our affliction. (II Cor. 7:4)

The pastor's identification of himself with his flock speaks in Paul's words in this correspondence:

Ye are in our hearts to die together and live together. (II Cor. 7:3)

His practical skill as a leader reveals itself in his counsel to the Corinthians to accept reason as a more dependable guide in religion than ecstatic experience:

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He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. (I Cor. 14:4)

In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. (I Cor. 14:19)

He appeals to their sense of corporate unity as bringing proportion into their estimate of varying kinds of religious activity:

For the body is not one member, but many. . . . Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all gifts of healings? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But desire earnestly the greater gifts. (I Cor. 12:14, 27-31)

Their factions seem trivial divisions as he turns their thought to the unity of all Christian leadership:

What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him. I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth, and he that watereth are one. . . . For we are God's fellow-workers. (I Cor. 3:5-9)

Nowhere in his writing does Paul reveal more fully than in these Corinthian letters his gifts as pastor and teacher.

The letter to the *Romans* brings us an interesting contrast to these earlier letters. Though it deals with

the same problem as Galatians, namely the relation of Christianity to the Jewish law, though it is often concerned, as the Corinthian letters are, with moral problems raised by the relationship of the Christian group to the Hellenistic society in which it lived, this letter has its own distinctive character. Written to a church which he had never visited, with the intent of preparing its members for the gospel which he hoped one day to bring to them in person, it assumes more nearly the character of a complete definition of Paul's faith. It was naturally a less personal letter than those which had gone to communities where he knew the people well. Its tone is more argumentative; its scope is broader. Paul's important themes of sanctification, justification, and revelation are developed here, but all in relation to his central religious principle,—that of faith.

Faith is to him the heart of religion. It has superseded the law, whose purpose he now sees clearly was to lead up to this principle of religious experience. On man's side, faith makes possible the life of the spirit, which triumphs over the flesh, and resolves the conflict between the higher and the lower in man's nature. On God's side, it is the complete revelation of His righteousness in the gift of His Son Jesus Christ.

In no other letter do we have so full an exposition of Paul's thought upon the meaning of Christianity to both Jew and Gentile. The universality of the Christian gospel is made abundantly clear by his treatment of the characteristic emphasis of both Greek and Jewish thought. Neither the renowned culture or "wisdom" of the Greeks, nor the zealous observance of a moral law, characteristic of Jewish religion, could in his view give ultimate salva-

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tion. Both Jew and Gentile could find in Christianity not only release from sin, but a life of freedom and heightened energy in the acceptance of God's gift of salvation through faith in Christ.

Glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Rom. 2:10)

One of the best loved chapters in this great letter is the one in which Paul describes with such true insight into human experience the struggle, which apparently he himself knows so well, between the higher and the lower desires in man's nature. Each of us reads the story of his own aspiration and struggle in his lines:

Not what I would, that do I practise; but what I hate, that I do. (Rom. 7:15)

To will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise. (Rom. 7:18-19)

I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? (Rom. 7:22-24)

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. (Rom. 8:2)

Similarly the lines that express his joy in the new life that he has found through the Christian gospel are pertinent to the experience of us all when old tensions have

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found release, and religion's great gift of inward poise and peace has been bestowed upon us.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:37-39)

As one measures today the effectiveness of these lines, one's thought inevitably turns backward to the occasion and purpose of the letter. The Christian group in Rome could not have failed to be stirred by it, and they must have looked forward with eager anticipation to the promised visit of its author.

But Paul's journey to Rome took place under far different circumstances and auspices from those which he and they had anticipated. As a prisoner, he took up his life in Rome, and from that imprisonment so scantily described in the closing sentences of the book of Acts were written the four remaining letters from his hand which the New Testament contains—namely, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, and Philippians.

Colossians and *Ephesians* have much in common with each other.³ Both address themselves to situations where

³ At the close of the letter to the Colossians, there is a suggestion that the letter be exchanged when it has been read with the one sent to the church at Laodicea. (Col. 4:16) Because of this injunction, and because of the fact that in some of the earliest manuscripts, the words "at Ephesus" are lacking in the salutation in Ephesians 1:1, it seems probable that this letter which now bears the name "Ephesians" was really the Laodicean letter. The words "at Ephesus" would then be thought of as having been

Christianity was threatened from some other type of religious thinking,—perhaps an esoteric cult with Gnostic tendencies. Both argue to establish the supremacy, the complete adequacy of Christ, and both urge the unity of the church. In Christ, they both affirm, is all the fullness of God, and in him the church finds her completeness. No ascetic practices, no fanciful speculations help. All things are “summed up” in Christ. The urgency of the author’s feeling is revealed in the beautiful prayer in Ephesians:

For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God. (Eph. 3:14-19)

These two letters represent Paul’s fully developed thinking. They are more abstract than the earlier letters because the problems presented by these two communities were

inserted when the letter, really an encyclical, was passed on to the church at Ephesus.

Of greater moment for us than this question of the original destination of the letter is the one regarding its authorship. Because on the one hand Ephesians differs both in ideas and in style from Paul’s earlier letters, and on the other, it sometimes seems imitative of Colossians, many scholars believe that the letter was written not by Paul but by one of his followers who deliberately assumed his master’s name in order to gain authority for his writing. For a clear statement of the argument on both sides, see Scott: *The Literature of the New Testament*, Ch. XVIII. In the absence of conclusive evidence to the contrary, the present author accepts the Pauline authorship.

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those of speculative thought, rather than those of practical living. Then too Paul's own experience as a teacher of religion had compelled him to deal directly with the interpretations of the universe which contemporary schools of philosophy were offering, and we see here the fruit of his years of work. He has come now to give to Christ a cosmical significance which to his earlier thought had not seemed necessary. It is in terms of an eternal, creative principle like the Logos of Alexandrian thought that Paul speaks of Christ in the Colossian letter:

who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist. (Col. 1:15-17)

Written at the same time as the Colossian letter and despatched by the same messenger to the same community, the little personal letter to *Philemon* is entirely different in character. It is a purely personal note which is concerned with the relationship between Philemon and his runaway slave, Onesimus, whom Paul has come to know in Rome. The note is a plea for the boy to be reinstated "no longer as a servant" but as "a brother beloved." There are no commands in it from leader to follower, no appeals to Paul's authority as an apostle. There is no discussion of slavery as a social problem. It is merely a plea from one Christian to another on behalf of a third whose shortcomings are frankly acknowledged, but for whom is desired not merely clemency but an active love

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and trust. The charm of the little letter is its wholeheartedness. It is so truly personal that one wonders how it came to be included in a corpus of letters designed for public use. By whatever means it came to pass, its inclusion in the New Testament canon was a most fortunate event, not only because the letter reveals so intimately Paul's character as a friend, but because in itself, it is so perfect an embodiment of Christian tact and understanding.

It is probable that *Philippians* is the latest letter that we have from Paul's hand. It is, indeed, his farewell note to a well-known and well-loved church. Thanks for their support of him, concern for the unity of their group life, identification of himself with all their interests,—all these find expression in the letter. But its keynote is a Christian virtue,—joy. An old man in prison, knowing that he is soon to die and saying his farewell to those who are his spiritual children, writes in this vein:

Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. (Phil. 4:4)

To this community of friends there was no need that he should write any complete exposition of his gospel. With them he was rather sharing his inner experience and the message of the letter centers about the control over circumstances which the Christian faith makes possible. The author's own courageous faith has given him poise in all his difficulties.

For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned

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the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me. (Phil. 4:11-13)

This spiritual gift he hopes may be also the possession of those to whom he writes.

In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Phil. 4:8)

The letter carries also a remarkably beautiful passage dealing with Christian humility. The theological implications of the lines have frequently been its major interest for modern readers; but for its author and its original readers, we may be quite sure that its practical message of unselfish service was first.

If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting the other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the

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being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:1-8)

It is passages such as these that have made the letter to the Philippians one of the most beloved writings of our Christian literary heritage.

These ten letters, directed to meet certain definite situations in the Græco-Roman world in the first century, have proved to have power both to express and to inspire Christian experience all over the world and all through Christian history. As we examine them with the hope of discovering some of the qualities in them which are responsible for this timeless vitality, let us accept the wise counsel of Professor Gilbert Murray who in his study of the Greek epic warns against any separate consideration of style as revealing the worth of the classics. Only as "style" is interpreted broadly enough, he says, to mean the same as "form," and "form" includes "spirit" is any such search profitable.

Professor Murray's interpretation of the quality of a classic is helpful to us at this point:

There seems to be in human effort a part that is progressive and transient, and another which is stationary and eternal. In some things we find that a very third-rate person who happens to have been born in 1860 can teach us far more than a great genius or a great reformer who was born in 1760. About electricity, for instance, or steamships. In the other sphere, it is the quality of the man or his work which tells. And it tells almost unaffected by distance: what was once beautiful is still beautiful; what

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was once great of soul is still great. And if Shakespeare was born nearly 400 years ago, and St. Paul 1900 and Æschylus 2000 odd, these facts do not seem to make any noteworthy difference in the value of their work. . . . The classical books are in general the books which have possessed for mankind such vitality and interest that they are still read and enjoyed at a time when all the other books written within ten centuries of them have long since been dead. There must be something peculiar about a book of which the world feels after two thousand years that it has not yet had enough. One would like to know what it is that produces this permanent and not transient quality of interest. And it is partly for that that we study the Classics.⁴

This must be our first observation upon the treatment of religion in Paul's letters,—that the enduring phases of religious experience have been made central. The Christian's relation to the Jewish law which was a crucial problem in Paul's day is a dead issue now, but not so his treatment of it. As the problem came to him it represented specific situations and interests of that society and that time only, such as the question about the rite of circumcision. As it emerged from his thinking, it had pertinence to religious experience everywhere and always.

If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk. (Gal. 5:25)

For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (Gal. 6:15)

The Corinthian group presented Paul with certain questions about the handling of the Lord's supper, questions

⁴ Gilbert Murray: *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, pp. 3-4. By permission The Clarendon Press, Oxford, England.

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that had to do with local problems and that seem to us now rather crude and childish. Certain persons were being undignified and thoughtless of others at the celebration of the Lord's supper and the leaders were consulting Paul about how to deal with them. He replied with complete disregard for the temporary aspects of the situation and directed their thought to the central issue,—the ultimate meaning of this rite. With simplicity and directness, he turned to the great story of the institution of the supper, telling it with words of such beauty that they have become the church's liturgy for its observance of this rite:

For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered
unto you,
that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed
took bread;
and when he had given thanks, he brake it and said,
This is my body, which is for you:
this do in remembrance of me.
In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying,
This cup is the new covenant in my blood:
this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.
For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup,
ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.

(I Cor. 11:23-26)

One of the finest examples of this insight into the essential and enduring aspects of a problem is Paul's handling of the Corinthians' dispute about what activity should be regarded as most important, prophecy, ecstatic speech, teaching, healing, or other works of wonder. Paul's answer to their queries is a masterly setting forth of the need for various kinds of service, and of the respect and honor that each type of worker should give to the others. The final

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injunction in Chapter 12, "Covet earnestly the best gifts" leads to the great poem on love in which Paul presents "a more excellent way."

The familiar poetic lines have penetrated to the heart of the problem. They reveal a fundamental insight into life, uncomplicated by any issues of secondary importance, one deep discernment into the nature of human relationships, true to the experience of us all, but seldom seen or expressed with such clarity and simplicity.

This single insight is, moreover, put before us in terms of concrete action. Love has been the theme of many a poem in religious literature, and never was a theme more susceptible of sentimental treatment, but this poem distinguishes itself by its complete freedom from sentimentality. Love is not merely a feeling here; it is character at work in human relationships. The stuff of daily experience is here, with true understanding of what love lets one do:

Love suffereth long, and is kind;
love envieth not;
love vaunteth not itself,
is not puffed up,
doth not behave itself unseemly,
seeketh not its own,
is not provoked,
taketh not account of evil;
rejoiceth not in unrighteousness,
but rejoiceth with the truth;
beareth all things,
believeth all things,
hopeth all things,
endureth all things. (I Cor. 13:4-7)

This striking concreteness of the poem's interpretation is not, however, such as to limit its scope. The infinity of

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love is seen with corresponding clarity. As we have just seen, the field of its activity knows no limits. It spends itself endlessly; bearing, believing, hoping, and enduring "all things." It *never* fails; it lets one know fully. It abides forever. This is the artist's insight,—to see eternal value working in the concrete ways of human behavior; the timeless taking its place in the human world of time.

A clear discernment, then, of the significant aspects of religious experience reveals itself in Paul's writing. A second characteristic that has made it permanently helpful is its affirmative quality. His distinctive emphases are positive: faith, freedom, God's righteousness, the "new man" who forgets the things that are behind and presses forward to the things that are before. Paul asks his readers to center their thought on things that are lovely and of good report. He believes in the triumph of the spirit. Even when he deals most graphically with man's struggle with sin, it is to emphasize the work of the Spirit which makes one "more than conqueror."

One appreciates more fully this positive note in Paul's writing if one compares his letters with contemporary thinking. His was a time characterized rather by disillusionment and pessimism than by hope. Roman epitaphs reveal the world-weariness of the time. One that was used so frequently and was so universally known that it was sometimes represented by only its initial letters carries a pathetic note of boredom with life:

I was not
I was
I am not
I do not care.⁵

⁵ Cited in Willoughby: *Pagan Regeneration*, p. 292.

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The promises that the mystery-cults gave to their initiates often had to do with release from or compensation for the gloom and distress of human experience. An Orphic initiation formula allows the initiate to say:

I have flown out of the sorrowful weary Wheel,
I have passed with eager feet to the Circle desired.⁶

Lucretius, to be sure, who had written his great poem *On the Nature of Things* only shortly before Paul's time, had wished to free men from superstition and the fear of death. But he took the way of negation to do so, denying the possibility of immortality and offering his consolation on the basis of this denial.

A simpler contrast to Paul, but a telling one, is offered in a little letter of the second century A.D. discovered in the papyri at Oxyrhynchus, in which a certain Irene writes to her friends Taonnophris and Philon, a couple who have lost their son by death. Full of tenderness and sympathy, the letter yet reveals the negative spirit of the age in saying,

But truly, there is nothing anyone can do in the face of such things. Do you therefore comfort one another.⁷

With reference to the same tragic situation of the loss of friends by death, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians,

Ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. (I Thes. 4:13)

And to the Corinthians,

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁷ Milligan: *Selections from the Greek Papyri*, p. 95.

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Now hath Christ been raised from the dead,
the first-fruits of them that are asleep.

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For this corruptible must put on incorruption,
and this mortal must put on immortality.

(I Cor. 15:20, 53)

Again, we should note, as characteristic of Paul, the wholeness of view that he achieves. The universal pertinence of his writing has come partly at least through this inclusiveness of his thought. There is "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Christ is "all in all." The ideal for man is one that can know "neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free" "no male and female" "for all ye are one man in Christ Jesus." This ultimate ideal for humanity was nobly expressed in the Ephesian letter:

Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. (Eph. 4:13)

A boundless hope, rooted in religious faith, gave this quality of wholeness to his interpretation of religion.

These great traits of mind are matched in Paul by the qualities of his heart. His letters "breathe a quality of passion, rare if not unique."⁸ In Thornton Wilder's story *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, the Conde is said to have delighted in the Marquesa's letters; but, says the author, "he thought when he had enjoyed the style, he had extracted all their richness and intention, missing (as most

⁸ Raven: *Jesus and the Gospel of Love*, p. 45.

readers do) the whole purport of literature, which is the notation of the heart." It is this "notation of the heart,"—the passion and intensity with which he writes,—that makes Paul live for us today as we read these few bits of his writing which have come down to us through the centuries. His relationships with his followers become a present experience to us; the great themes of religion with which he deals come to life beneath his hand; the life of the spirit which constitutes the very texture of his soul seems possible to us also as we read what he wrote out of the fullness of his heart.

This passionate eagerness makes for great variety in Paul's modes of expression. Now he is argumentative, now pleading and persuasive. Sometimes his sentences have the terseness of epigram,—“the wages of sin is death;” sometimes they are expansive and repetitious as in the opening paragraph of the Ephesian letter. Now the mood is what he himself describes as “painful,” making his readers “sorry.” Now it is exuberant to the point of ecstasy, as in the great passage which closes the eighth chapter of Romans. Sometimes he is bold and self-assertive; sometimes humble. Varied figures of speech and rhetorical devices are tools in his hand,—metaphor and simile, paradox, antithesis, question and answer, exclamation and expostulation. Powerful resources were at his command as a writer.

Sometimes, to be sure, the intensity of his feeling leads Paul into difficulties of expression. Phrases and clauses seem almost to trip and tumble over one another in his eagerness to make his point. His figures are not always felicitous, nor his arguments always convincing. The “allegory,” as he styles it, of the two covenants in Gala-

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tians seems hardly skillful in making his point clear. But these are the faults attendant upon the quality of his genius. They are the result of the torrential energy of his feeling. He wrote as one aflame, pouring the intensity of his nature into the written word. This was for him the "notation of the heart."

At the close of the letter to the Ephesians Paul asked his readers to pray for him,

that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly as I ought to speak. (Eph. 6:19-20)

The prayer was his own before he gave it to his friends. And the answer was his as well. His life-story is compressed into this single utterance, and the letters are its testimony and witness even unto today. Through them he has over all the centuries been constantly making known "with boldness the mystery of the gospel."

CHAPTER IV

A DIARY AND SOME STORIES OF THE EARLY CHURCH

PAUL's letters were written during his most active years of work, but were we dependent on the letters alone we should know little of his own movements during that time. Fortunately the story of those years has been told for us in the book of Acts. If one examines carefully the chapters in Acts which tell the story of Paul's journeys, one sees that in part the narrative depends upon an earlier record, a notebook or diary kept by some one who travelled with Paul for a considerable part of his journeys. One recognizes these fragments by their use of the first personal pronoun, "we." These portions, which are often designated as the "we-sections," are as follows:

Acts 16:10-17 the story of Paul's going over into Macedonia on his second missionary journey, and of the first events of his visit in Philippi.

Acts 20:5-15 the record of Paul's last journey to Jerusalem, from Troas to Miletus.

Acts 21:1-18 the final stages of his journey to Jerusalem.

Acts 27:1-28:16 the story of Paul's journey to Rome as a prisoner, including the shipwreck, and the landing first at Melita and finally at Puteoli.

We must not, however, assume that these passages

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represent the exact limits of the diary. They are merely those that reveal themselves as such by the use of the first personal pronoun. Thus they have served as valuable evidence that a diary-record was used by the author of Acts, but the pronoun is not an infallible clue. The author may not have kept it consistently when he brought the matter of the journal into his story; the narrative may not always have required the pronoun. The most that can be said is that in these passages which employ the pronoun "we," the diary reveals itself clearly. In adjacent passages it may very possibly have been employed, but we cannot be sure.

It is of course a question of great interest as to whose record this is, but scholarship has no sure answer to give. The close similarity of the we-passages in both style and ideas to the remainder of the book of Acts has led many to accept the opinion that the author of Acts was using his own diary, a journal which he himself had kept while he was travelling with Paul. This opinion would be borne out by the freedom and facility with which the author uses the diary, and by the casualness of his transitions to it. On the whole there seems to be no strong objection to this view.

The further question as to the identity of the author has reference not only to Acts, but also to the third gospel, because the two works are clearly but two volumes of one work. The ancient tradition assigning this joint work to Luke is substantiated by the fact that we know Luke to have been Paul's companion and friend.¹ Many scholars

¹ Col. 4:14 and Philemon 1:24. For a discussion of this problem of the authorship of Luke-Acts, see Scott: *The Literature of the New Testament*, Ch. VI; and Moffatt: *An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, pp. 295 ff.

accept the view that Luke, known to us as "the beloved physician," was the author of both the travel-diary and the two-volume work, Luke-Acts.

Just as we examined in an earlier chapter the *Q* material which was later incorporated in our present gospels, so let us now look at this journal which has made so vital a contribution to our knowledge of Paul's travels. As we have already said, there are no marked characteristics of either thought or expression which differentiate these passages from the rest of the book of which they are a part. Probably many readers have followed the narrative of Paul's second journey without noticing the author's transition to the first person at Acts 16:8-10.

They came down to Troas. . . . And when he had seen the vision, straightway, *we* sought to go forth into Macedonia.

In this case, as in the others, the changed pronoun attracts little notice because no stylistic differences set off the passage in which it appears from the surrounding narrative.

The paragraph, to be sure, has great charm, with its little picture of the sabbath meeting by the riverside, with its characterization of Lydia, the business woman, as one "whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul," and with its concern to note her urgent hospitality. These are intimate and personal bits which we should meet with some surprise in a chronicle of the early church were it not for the fact that we have been prepared for just such intimacy and circumstantiality in the remainder of the narrative.

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In the second passage, Chapter 20, verses 5-15, the little story of Eutychus who was "borne down with deep sleep . . . as Paul discoursed yet longer" is full of vivid touches that suggest the writer's firsthand acquaintance with the incident. The gathering together of the company to break bread, the many lights in the upper chamber, Paul's tenderness with the lad as he picked him up after his fall, the long talk "even till break of day"—all these concrete bits give both charm and vividness to the narrative. The story is told, moreover, with the spontaneity and freshness of interest that belong to firsthand participation in its events. Personal and circumstantial details are its interest, not the abstract meaning of them as history.

But again we should be careful not to assume that this vividness and spontaneity are characteristics of the we-passages alone. In the same chapter as this story of Eutychus, for example, we find a passage of equally graphic writing with the same qualities of naturalness and spontaneity, in which the first personal pronoun does not appear:

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way unto the ship.

A similar situation prevails, we discover, in Chapter 21, where the first eighteen verses are in the first person and the remaining verses in the third. The course of the voyage from Miletus, the landing at Tyre, the meeting with the disciples there, the apprehension of Paul's friends

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about his going to Jerusalem are all told in the first person. They are narrated, moreover, with a freshness of interest that suggests an immediate participation of the writer in these events. Particularly one is struck with the skill and simplicity with which the author conveys his feeling to us in the little paragraph telling of Paul's departure from Tyre:

And when it came to pass that we had accomplished the days, we departed and went on our journey; and they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were out of the city: and kneeling down on the beach, we prayed and bade each other farewell; and we went on board the ship, but they returned home again.

It is true that the simplicity of this passage is not matched by any other portion of the chapter; but on the other hand, we do not find any decided change in the quality of the narrative in the latter part of the chapter, where the first personal pronoun has been forsaken for the third. Certainly we have vividness and strong feeling present in the story of Paul's being led away from the mob by the chief captain and his soldiers:

And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd; for the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, Away with him. And as Paul was about to be brought into the castle, he saith unto the chief captain, May I say something unto thee? And he said, Dost thou know Greek? Art thou not the Egyptian, who before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins? But Paul said, I am

a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people. And when he had given him leave, Paul standing on the stairs, beckoned with the hand unto the people; and when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, saying, Brethren and fathers, hear ye the defence which I now make unto you.

Such a passage as this forbids our making exclusive claims for the vividness and dramatic quality of the we-passages; but when we turn to the last of the four, the story of Paul's voyage to Rome in Chapter 27 and the first sixteen verses of Chapter 28, we shall surely give it a high place for its lively and graphic story of navigating a ship through storm. The accuracy and precision with which nautical matters are treated here have often been commented upon, and it is equally exact and animated in its record of the personal aspects of the crisis.

In reading this story, one lives again through the dangers and anxieties of that perilous time. The fear of the seamen; the disagreement about what should be done; the "praying for day" after "letting go four anchors from the stern"; the desperate attempt to launch a boat, and then the cutting of her ropes; the sane counsel offered by Paul that they all take food, and the resultant lifting of the morale; the dramatic escape from the ship, some swimming, "some on planks and some on other things from the ship,"—all these become a present experience to us as we read the spirited story.

No part of this extraordinary narrative shows greater skill than the little tale of Paul's visit on the island of Melita.

And when we were escaped, then we knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarians showed us no common kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us all, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out by reason of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous creature hanging from his hand, they said one to another, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he hath escaped from the sea, yet Justice hath not suffered to live. Howbeit he shook off the creature into the fire, and took no harm. But they expected that he would have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but when they were long in expectation and beheld nothing amiss come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

Though the story is told with seeming artlessness, one notes that part of its effectiveness at least is due to its many contrasts: the rain and the cold on the one hand, the grateful warmth of the fire on the other; the fear and superstition of the inhabitants of the island, setting off the composure of Paul; the tense anticipation of swift harm to Paul which resolved itself into a "long expectation" during which "nothing amiss" happened; the prompt judgment that Paul was a murderer escaping from justice, with its quaint sequel, "they changed their minds, and said that he was a god."

We must think of this story as coming to us from a record whose only motive was to preserve the details of an important journey. This artistry in its narration was a supererogatory grace, but one to which the book of Acts owes much of its charm. The author of this travel-diary, whoever he was, was a born story-teller.

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While this early record of Paul's journeys was being kept by one who travelled with him, events of significance were happening at Jerusalem and Antioch, the two eastern centers of the church's life. Here, too, stories were being told and recorded of the leadership of the Spirit as manifested in the deeds and words of Christian leaders. Here probably little collections of such records were being made, and it seems likely that documents of this kind were used by Luke when he wrote Acts. The first twelve chapters of the book seem almost certainly to have written records underlying them.

It is not easy to determine the exact nature of these records that formed the basis of the early part of the book, but that there were written sources most scholars would agree. Certain duplications of event, such as the two stories of the arrest of the apostles in Chapters 4 and 5 suggest a compilation of at least two documents, and on the whole it seems probable that one of these records centered about the church in Jerusalem, and the other about that important and thriving Christian community at Antioch.

As we try to press back of the present story in Acts and discover the actual content of these early records, we find ourselves faced with an exceedingly difficult task. In the case of the later gospels, Matthew and Luke, we have one of their sources actually in our hands in the gospel of Mark. In the case of the latter part of Acts, we have at least portions of an earlier record which can be recognized by their preservation of the first personal pronoun. In the case of these earlier chapters of Acts, however, there are but signs here and there that earlier tales are being taken up by the author and woven by him into the texture of

the story which we now possess, and these are not enough to afford us any clear notion of the form or content of the early records.

One of these signs that earlier documents were employed by our author appears at the end of Chapter 7. Even the casual reader will notice that the story of the death of Stephen is not free composition on the part of the present author. One record which he employed brought the story to a close as follows:

And they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

But a second story is called in, which concluded this way:

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death.

This is exactly what we should expect from the writer of an early chronicle; it was the usual literary method of the time. But a more critical age like our own would be glad to know more accurately than our present data allow both the nature and the contents of these early records. In this case, however, the author has assimilated these documents quite freely to his own purpose and style of writing, so that we can only by conjecture define their limits, and in a very general way describe their characteristics.

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Some of these stories may have come to Luke by word of mouth rather than through written record. But whether they came through the medium of the spoken word, or through written record, the situation is certainly different from that in the latter part of Acts where he was drawing upon his own memory or his own journal. There the events were known to him at firsthand. Here he had to gather the material from others, either as they told it to him, or as they had committed it to writing. From the form in which the material appears in Acts, it seems probable that it had achieved at least a degree of fixity either through writing or through repeated telling before it reached the hands of Luke.

As we study these stories of the early church and try to assess their qualities, we realize that their primary characteristic is a sense of wonder at the work of the Spirit in their midst. The mighty hand of divine destiny was guiding the little community forward in the enterprise of spreading the good news. Supernatural events were easily credible. Deeds of healing, miraculous releases from prison, instances of divine guidance all testify to the Spirit's constant presence. Pentecost was more than an event; it was a symbol of the divine order of history which was beginning to assert itself in the life of men. Ecstatic speech, tongues of fire, and sounds as of a rushing mighty wind were witness to the momentousness of this day. Not everyone understood the meaning of these events. All were "filled with wonder and amazement," but many asked "what meaneth this?" Those who wrote the record, however, were not in doubt. To them it was the solemn evidence that the Spirit of God had taken their life in charge.

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As a result of this sense of high mission on the part of the leaders, the Christian community is represented by these stories as moving forward in both confidence and joy. Neither opposition nor persecution could quench that over-ruling enthusiasm. Peter and John, counselled by the Jewish authorities to cease their activities, replied, "We cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard." It was by their boldness that they were known to have been with Jesus. Stephen, dying, is reported to have looked up steadfastly into heaven and to have seen the glory of God. And the community of believers, whether at home or in company with one another, is said to have taken their food "with gladness, . . . praising God."

These qualities of reverence and of enthusiasm which pervade the narratives are matched by a sense for the dramatic in the unfolding of a tale. Modern criticism in dealing with these stories has often been preoccupied with the analysis of their contents to discover their factual accuracy, and for that reason has not laid stress on their dramatic quality. To appreciate their effectiveness as stories, one must set aside for the moment the interests of the historical critic and enter into them with the whole-heartedness of a child intent on a tale. Only then does one realize and enjoy to the full their power to bring to life events and personalities of that ancient world.

The note of poetic justice is struck at the beginning in the story of Judas' tragic end. Peter characterizes him with great simplicity as one who "was guide to them that took Jesus" and then come the solemn words from a psalm which are like a dirge sung by the chorus in a Greek tragedy:

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Let his habitation be made desolate.
And let no man dwell therein. (Acts 1:20)

The story of the cure of the lame beggar at the Gate Beautiful makes its effect with simple but striking lines,—first the picture of the helpless man carried to his privileged place for begging, his request to Peter and John for money, then Peter's unexpected command, "Look on us," the man's eager expectancy, and the graphic lines that tell of his cure:

And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. (Acts 3:1-10)

Simple as the story is, it carries dramatic appeal in its vivid portrayal of the unexpected results of a casual meeting.

Again, the pathetic little tale of Ananias and Sapphira has its dramatic qualities. With great economy of phrase it tells of their shabby but all-too-human scheme to give only a part but to have credit for the whole. We feel for the poor culprits when Peter's probing questions search them, and we cannot but sympathize with them, even though the swift disaster overtaking them clearly links the life of their group with the cosmic powers that are on the side of truth and justice. We are one with the community as we read that

great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things. (Acts 5:1-11)

Story after story is marked by this strong sense for dramatic value and for the power to enlist the reader in the events and crises that they portray: Stephen stoned, but praying for his captors; the apostles led forth out of prison by an angel; Simon boldly proposing to buy the power of the Spirit, but reduced to fear by Peter's scathing rebuke; Philip running to overtake the Ethiopian, and then being spirited away, leaving the Ethiopian rejoicing as a result of this brief but impressive visitation; Peter and Cornelius simultaneously moved by visions which brought their significant interview to pass; Peter knocking at the gate of John Mark's house, recognized by Rhoda the maid, but with difficulty convincing his nearest friends of his identity. Whoever the tellers or recorders were, they knew how to make vivid both the personalities and the situations with which they dealt.

Exactly what proportion of these qualities in the stories,—their sense of wonder, their enthusiasm, their dramatic power,—are due to Luke who brought them into his chronicle, and what proportion to their earlier narrators or recorders no one today can possibly determine with the data that we now possess. Perhaps it is not so important for us to do that as it is for us to recognize that the stories have come to us touched by an artistry of no mean order.

These narratives came into being in a credulous age. They bear upon them the marks of a simple world-view,—childlike ideas about divine guidance and intervention, unscientific views of health, disease, and death, naïve conceptions of the world of space. If in matters of detail we cannot accept them today at their face value, that is not to say that they are not full of significance to us. Through these narratives and in them, we can live again those

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early days of high enthusiasm, and can experience again the momentum of the growing church. Out of the shadows which might so easily have obscured the first years, these tales with their zestfulness and power of dramatic portrayal have rescued the events, the personalities, the spirit that characterized the Christian community. Fresh, vivid, permeated with an exalted enthusiasm, they bring the drama of that ancient life before us today as no matter-of-fact account, however accurate in detail, could possibly do.

It is right that in our study of the early church we should exert every effort to separate the historical from the legendary in these stories. Indeed those who have done the most expert work in this field are those who give us the greatest assurance that the main lines of the church's growth are recorded with trustworthy accuracy in the book of Acts.² In any such process of analysis, however, some of the elements that make up these stories must necessarily be thought of as due to the legend-making tendencies of an early time, or to unsophisticated notions about the world and human experience. As we make these important and necessary discriminations, however, it is no less important to exercise the judgment which appreciates the beauty of the stories, and values the fervor of belief and the eagerness of spirit to which they testify.

In a later chapter we shall come to the consideration of both the travel-diary and these early stories as parts of the larger work into which they were brought by Luke. As we think in connection with our study of Acts of the use made of them there, we shall see them in a new perspective, but here it is well to think of them in the setting in

² Cf. Scott: *The Literature of the New Testament*, pp. 102-104.

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which they came into being and to realize their worth in this early form. It was records such as these that not only preserved for later generations the story of the general course of events but revealed the attitudes, the beliefs and the enthusiasms of the primitive Christian community.

CHAPTER V

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

WE must now turn to a new phase of literary expression in the Christian movement. In the previous chapters we have been examining works that represent the very early years, the writings of the first generation of Christians,—*Q*, Paul's letters, and the early records which told the story of Paul's journeys and the life of the primitive Christian community. With the writing of the gospels, a new stage of literary composition was attained. Men were taking some of these earlier records, making use of them as they saw fit, and were building from them works that have wholeness and structure. Often that structure was very simple. In the case of Mark for instance, Wellhausen could speak of the gospel as "for the most part a mere collection of disconnected anecdotes."¹ But even if we view the gospels in this light, the process of assembling the stories implies some concept of a whole, and these wholes we have in our possession today.

We must now also take our stand, for viewing these works, in the western world of Hellenistic Christianity. The process of adaptation to the Gentile world which had to come if the Christian movement were to live at all had been rapidly pushed forward by Paul's work, and the year 70 A.D. saw it forced forward again by the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus, and the consequent end of any im-

¹ Wellhausen: *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, p. 51.

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portant home for the church there. All the books of the New Testament which we are now to consider had their origin in the world of Hellenistic thought. If some of them arose at the eastern end of the Roman Empire, as many think is true of Matthew or Hebrews, that is not to say that they were removed from the influences of the Hellenistic world. Antioch, that important and growing center of the eastern church, was a genuinely cosmopolitan city, and even cities which had been Jewish in origin were rapidly assimilating Hellenistic ways of thought and action.

We must therefore think of these Christian writings as adapting themselves, not only in the language in which they were written but in the purposes they aimed to serve, to the cultural situation of the Hellenistic world. This civilization, unified in organization by the Roman government, empowered to free intercourse by its possession of a common language, and by the well-policed network of Roman roads, was yet full of diversified cultural qualities, many different racial groups, many types of philosophy and religion, many new and unstable forms of social organization, guilds, brotherhoods, religious societies, trade-groupings and the like, which had resulted from the clash of cultures and the breakdown of old and tested ways of thought and experience.

Into this new territory with its economic extremes and injustices, with its cultural diversities and its unstable conditions of thought, the Christian interpretation of life had come with its freshness and vigor and had made its way like a blaze driven by the wind. New Christian groups in the great cosmopolitan cities looked to the apostles for interpretation of the life and teaching that were central to

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the gospel. Stories that had Palestine for their background and the Aramaic language for their medium were now brought into the western world and were retold in the *koiné*, the vernacular Greek which was the *lingua franca* for the whole Roman Empire,—retold for hearers to whom Palestine was a far corner of the earth, and Aramaic an unknown tongue.

Paul and Peter, the two most conspicuous workers of this first generation of Christians, met their death, we are told, in the local persecution of Christians in Rome under Nero. This cutting off of so strong a source of leadership, and in the case of Peter, of so direct a contact with the Master, seems to have provided the impetus for the first writing of the story of Jesus' life and work in any connected form.

It is generally believed that Mark, the earliest of the gospels, was written in Rome not long after Peter's death, probably close to the year 70. I do not propose to discuss in detail the grounds for this view, nor to debate the many questions which center about the date, authorship, and the place of composition of the gospel. Nor will it be in accord with the purposes of this study to weigh those interesting and provocative suggestions which are emanating from the contemporary school of criticism, known as the Form-historical school in Germany, which tend to controvert the position stated above. For our purposes, it is sufficient to assume the opinion, which is the one most generally accepted by scholars today, and to indicate the main lines of approach to it which have been pursued.

The facts about Mark's relation to Matthew and Luke,—that it was the earliest of the three and was used by the

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other two as a source,—have been determined by inductive study, a close comparison of the content, the order, and the wording of the three gospels. Indications about Mark's date and the kind of audience for which it was intended come from within the gospel itself. Chapter 13, for instance, with its treatment of the destruction of Jerusalem indicates that the gospel was written very near to this event, *i.e.* to the year 70 A.D. The wording of the gospel makes it clear that it has Gentile readers in view because it translates Aramaic words, interprets Jewish customs, and explains Palestinian geography (See Mark 7:3, 12:18, 13:3, 14:12, 7:11, 7:34, 3:17, 5:41, 15:34),—all of which would be quite unnecessary if it were being written for Jewish readers. But as to who its author was and in what place he wrote, the gospel itself gives no indication.

The heading "according to Mark" ² was not the author's own notation, and serves only to show us who the early church thought was the writer of the gospel. The earliest suggestion, other than this title, about who the author was has come to us through Papias, a writer of about the year 140 A.D. His own work has not survived but he is quoted by the church historian Eusebius as saying:

Mark who was the interpreter of Peter wrote accurately but not in order all that he remembered of the Lord's sayings or doings. For he did not hear the Lord or accompany him, but was later, as I said, a companion of Peter who gave his teachings as the occasion required without any attempt to give an ordered account of the Lord's words. So Mark was not wrong in writing down some

² On the question of the Marcan authorship of the second gospel see Burkitt: *Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus*, especially the Epilogue, and Scott: *The Literature of the New Testament*, Ch. III.

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things in this way from memory, for his one concern was not to omit or falsify any of the things he had heard.³

Although such a statement as this one cannot be taken as unquestionably authentic, there are a number of indications in this case to support it.⁴ The reference to Mark in I Peter 5:13 in which Mark's greetings are sent with those from the members of the Roman Church suggests his presence there at a time when Peter could be thought of as writing from Rome. Mark's name was not of sufficient importance to have given a reason for its being attached to a gospel for the purpose of giving authority to its words unless it really belonged to it. The contents of the gospel itself suggest a close connection between the author and actual eye-witnesses of the events related.

On the whole then, we may accept the view that this gospel is a story, based upon Peter's reminiscences, which was put down by Mark while he was in Rome after the death of Peter, probably close to the year 70 A.D. Let us now look at the narrative itself. What is the nature of this first connected story of Jesus? What kind of tale did Mark make from the materials that he could command?

One's first impression of the story is the abruptness of its beginning. It opens with a sort of caption or title, "The beginning of the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Then, following a brief quotation from the prophets, comes that instantaneous grappling with the tale itself, "John came." Not a word as to who John was, or whence he came. He appears merely as one who baptized and preached near the Jordan river. This is a strange

³ Eusebius, H. E. III, 39.

⁴ As Streeter says, the burden of proof is on those who would deny the traditional authorship in the case of Mark. *The Four Gospels*, p. 562.

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beginning for either a biography or a history. Surely any one writing with future readers in mind would feel compelled to give his narrative some setting of both place and time more adequate than this. We can only conclude that the writer has his own contemporaries in mind as his readers, and that he knows them to be at least partially familiar with the story he has to tell. This partial familiarity, we may suppose, he hopes to supplement with some notations as to the sequence of events and with some fuller accounts of both words and deeds, stories of which were perhaps circulating as unrelated units of narrative.

Surprising as this abrupt beginning is, it is not without its values for the modern reader. This headlong plunge into the narrative is suggestive of the energy of the new religion pouring itself as a vital force into an old and decadent civilization. It was a creative moment in religious history of which this writing was the expression. "*John came*" is like the sudden ringing of a bell summoning all within the range of its tone to gather and hear the "good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

The next striking feature of the gospel that we notice as we progress in our examination of it is its omissions as it takes up the narrative about Jesus himself. There is no birth story here, no notation about Jesus' parents, no hint about his boyhood or early life, no suggestion about his age, no characterization of him. He appears on the scene almost as abruptly as John did:

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan.

This introduction of the central figure of the story as

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needing no explanatory items is indicative of the author's conception of his task. It is not backgrounds and interpretations that he is called to give. He is merely to allow the great Master to speak for himself through his own works and words.

As we move on in the story other omissions strike us. Some of the best-known and best-loved sayings of Jesus are not here,—those that make up the sermon on the mount in Matthew. The dearly loved parables of the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, the great supper, and the lost sheep are not here. No central and specified place in the story is given to Jesus' teaching. Repeatedly he is spoken of as teaching but the content of the teaching is reported in disconnected bits and often in conjunction with narrative of events. We must not be led into the error of thinking that Mark does not report what Jesus taught. He gives us many of Jesus' sayings: those about the bridegroom, about the Sabbath being made for man, about the relation of forgiveness to prayer, about the difference between ceremonial uncleanness and that which is inward, about the kingdom divided against itself, about receiving the kingdom as a little child, about the lamp put under the bushel, about salt, and others. There are the parables of the sower, the grain of mustard seed and of the servants in the vineyard, and the little parables of the new patches on old cloth and the new wine in old bottles. But no large portion of the story is set aside for the teaching and its introduction often is incidental to the march of events.

But if we turn now from these negative points to the more positive consideration of what the book offers us, we see that we have a story of singular objectivity and sim-

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plicity. Its aim might be described as the presenting of the public ministry of Jesus, his remarkable works and words in about the sequence in which they are believed by the author to have occurred:—*i.e.* his baptism and temptation; his ministry in Galilee; his withdrawal to the north; his journey to Jerusalem; his last week in Jerusalem; his death and resurrection. So little has the author thrust himself into the picture that we look in vain for any word about his plan or purpose in writing or for any explicit interpretation of his own upon a word or work of Jesus.

That there is implicit interpretation we cannot deny, for the very selection and proportion of the material is that; but the writer is content to stand back from his portrait with no attempt by explanatory word or phrase to bring about a judgment in the reader's mind. What he seems to think about his office as author is that by the assembling of the material he fulfils his task. He knows what one should think about this Jesus, but he need not urge his views upon the reader, for the facts are a more urgent advocate than he himself could possibly be.

We have suggested above that the proportionate emphases of the story are indices to the author's thought about his subject. With Mark, this is a noteworthy item. More than a third of his work deals with Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, the passion, death, and resurrection. What further treatment Mark gave to the resurrection appearances beyond his one story in Chapter 16, verses 1-8, we cannot know, for the original conclusion to the gospel has been lost. All the early manuscripts of Mark that we have end with Chapter 16, verse 8. What appears in verses 9-20 is the work of some later writer who saw that the ending

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had been lost and tried as best he could to fill out to a proper conclusion what had been so abruptly broken off. Taking the work as it stands, it would seem that in the author's thought, the passion and death of Jesus took a central place of importance.

Again, if proportion is a guide to Mark's thought, we should say that he found the healing and wonder-working power of Jesus to be of great significance. He gives a large place in his narrative to the records of Jesus' wonderful deeds. They are related here with a remarkable objectivity; the author makes no attempt to explain or interpret them; no judgments are explicitly derived from them; they stand, rather, as testimony in themselves to the manner of man that Jesus was. Mark's liking for them is indicated by his inclusion of two forms of the story of the multiplication of the loaves. This story appears as a feeding of five thousand persons in Chapter 6 and four thousand in Chapter 8. Both these versions were ready to Mark's hand and he took them both, thinking of them uncritically as doubly attesting the wonderful power of Jesus.

A less tangible, but no less important characteristic of Mark's story is one to which Professor Cadbury calls attention in his *The Making of Luke-Acts*,⁵ namely its atmosphere or "pervasive motif" of mystery. Dr. Cadbury points to Mark's stress on Jesus' desire to remain hid, his commands to silence about his cures, his private teaching to a small group of disciples, the mysterious preparations for the last supper, and the suggestion that the parables were intended to conceal rather than to reveal his meanings, and finds that these phenomena produce an "indefinable

⁵ Ch. VII.

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weirdness, a sense of mystery and tragedy" in the gospel. This is not to suggest that these various items are creations of Mark's mind alone. They may well have existed to a certain extent in the tradition as it came to him. But Mark has handled them in his story in such a way as to make their effect cumulative. In his record they play their fullest possible rôle, and taken together they give a recognizable coloring to his tale. With this atmosphere which permeates the gospel, the proportion given to the passion-narrative is fully in harmony. The cross had its premonitions throughout the story; its shadow lay on the narrative as a whole.

Our recognition of a "pervasive motif" or coloring for the story leads us directly to the question of its structure. Has the book, as some have maintained, a genuinely dramatic structure which reaches its climax in the confession of Peter at Cæsarea Philippi, and finds its logical issue in the cross? Does this atmosphere of mystery center about something which might in terms of dramatic criticism be called a plot, *i.e.* the messianic secret, early perceived by the demons, but recognized only at Cæsarea Philippi by the disciples, and finally made the issue in the opposition that precipitated the tragic outcome of the story? Was there a manipulation of the material by the author in the interests of a conscious purpose, a purpose for dramatic unity?

These questions have often been countered by those of quite opposite tenor. Is the book quite lacking in structure, a mere haphazard gathering together of units of tradition without planful arrangement on the part of the author? Is it "a mere collection of disconnected anecdotes"? This second view has found favor in a number

of recent writings. Professor Case has spoken of the process of authorship in this gospel as similar to the process employed in putting beads on a string.⁶ The German Form-critics, as a result of their general view that the material about Jesus was produced by the church as teaching forms in very small units, have pulverized the gospels into minute, disconnected elements. This view in its preoccupation with the uses of the material for cultic purposes sacrifices literary wholeness, and in my judgment sometimes fails to keep a true historical perspective on the growth of the gospels.

The view which I wish to propose about Mark's structure recognizes elements of truth in both these positions but lies between the two. It admits that the incidents are often lacking in sequential relationship to one another, that connections are often faulty, and sometimes wholly absent, but, on the other hand, it acknowledges the validity of Professor Burkitt's comment that the gospel has an "impressive sense of movement." The view that I propose suggests that although the gospel is a work of great simplicity—one might rightly say "of literary naïveté," it is still an artistic whole; that it has an element of dramatic unity, not because of any conscious manipulation of the material by the author, but because of the nature of the material itself and the author's deep feeling for it. The story has an inevitable "drive" toward the tragic but infinitely meaningful events of Jesus' passion and death. The confession of Cæsarea Philippi comes to have the significance of climax because it reveals the secret of the tragedy in the messianic claim. The shadow dimly perceived at first grows heavier from that point, and the "pervasive motif

⁶ *Jesus, a New Biography*, p. 99.

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of mystery" is now the shared conviction that "the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." From now on, the story has the mingling of death with triumph which is the very essence of tragedy.

It is significant that one who has read Mark through with this question of wholeness in mind cannot conceive of any other placing for Peter's confession than the exact position which it has been given by the author. It is preceded, if you will, by disconnected incidents which might be interchanged in position without damage to the sweep of the story. (The notion of haphazard stringing together of the incidents must yield, however, in some instances to the recognition of topical groupings, such as the group of conflicts in the section 2:1 to 3:6). But all these stories are informed with the sense of wonder at the words and deeds of the great figure who is central to the tale. The demons recognize and fear him; the sick are healed by him; the Pharisees question and oppose him; even the disciples are puzzled by him to a degree that makes the Master turn to them with the question: "Are ye so without understanding also?" The mystery, however, begins to find its solution at Cæsarea Philippi, and from there the path is straight and clear to its unavoidably tragic end,—first the transfiguration, then the turning toward Judea through the country beyond Jordan, then the triumphal entry with its suggestion of symbolic meaning, and finally that last week, tense with feeling and ominous with its presage of the end.⁷

⁷ It is interesting to note that, in quite a different connection, Dr. Manson emphasizes the crucial position in Jesus' ministry of Peter's confession at Cæsarea Philippi, as placed by Mark. W. T. Manson: *The Teaching of Jesus*.

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This view would suggest that such unity, such dramatic structure as is here is not the result of conscious artistry or planful manipulation of the material, but that it is here because the matter dealt with is the stuff of tragedy in its highest form, and because the writer of the story, quite untutored in the arts of literature, wrote with such depth of feeling, with such energy of conviction, that what he wrote transcended his own conception of his task.

It is helpful in this connection to realize how simply such a work would be conceived in the mind of such a writer. We must put from our minds of course our modern notions of what biography is. Writing a biographical work in the first century A.D. called up no thoughts of sifting evidence, of weighing data in the interests of an interpretive theory, no studied attempts to give local color, no conceptions of psychological exactness, such as belong to biographical writing today. A few biographies from ancient times have come down to us and they help us to see how simply such a task was conceived: Xenophon's *Life of Socrates*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Diogenes Lærtius' *Lives of the Philosophers*, Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. And yet simple as these works are in comparison with modern writings, classifying rather as memoirs or memorabilia rather than as biography, no one of them serves as a parallel for the gospels. All of them were more ambitious in plan and scope than the gospels; all of them reveal more clearly than the gospels do the conception of the task as envisaged by their authors; no one of them is so completely objective as Mark is in its treatment of the life considered. Any such comparison as this brings a fresh realization of the great simplicity of the records about Jesus. They were a simple form of composition, not

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only as compared with the standards of today, but as viewed in relation to earlier or contemporary forms. They were a gathering together of things said and done by the great Teacher, written not for the purposes of history or of literature, but for the purposes of religious teaching. They were tracts rather than *belles lettres*, and any attempt to appraise them from a literary point of view should be guarded by this recognition.

To return now with this caution in mind to our question of the structure and wholeness of Mark, let us summarize as follows: Mark differs from the earlier collections of stories about Jesus or tabulations of his sayings in that it sets out to give a connected view of the whole ministry. It is a work of extraordinary simplicity and objectivity, with some surprising omissions and some obvious limitations as a biographical work. Nevertheless, it is a work, which within its limitations, is a literary whole with an element of dramatic unity about it. This dramatic structure we must think of not as a product of conscious artistry on the part of the author but as a result of the nature of the material coupled with the author's deep feeling for it. Unstudied as it is, however, it is no less potent in its effect upon the reader.

Let us now turn to another quality of Mark's gospel which should be noted if its genius is to be properly understood and appreciated,—namely its remarkably graphic style of writing. I do not wish to suggest here that we are dealing with a work of literary finish. Mark is a work of many roughnesses. The English translation has smoothed over some of the near-barbarisms of the Greek style, but even in the English version the writing is colloquial and sometimes rough. The connectives often fail to

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give the real relationship of clause to clause, as for example:

And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

And they were on the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid.

The pronouns are sometimes ambiguous in their reference:

And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphæus sitting at the place of toll, and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

And they bring to him a blind man and beseech him to touch him.

Phrases and clauses are often loosely strung together:

And a woman, who had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, having heard the things concerning Jesus, came in the crowd behind, and touched his garment.

Even the simplest manipulations of the material to indicate time relationships, or cause and effect are often lacking, and there is little variation from the monotonous "and" which, except for the alternative "and straightway," serves as link between the clauses. The redundancy of Mark's writing has often been pointed out, and one is interested to notice how often Matthew and Luke correct this fault as they make use of Mark's material:

At even, when the sun was set.

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And the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

He began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter.

I know not, neither understand I.

Today, even this night.

Very early, . . . when the sun was risen.

These are elementary stylistic faults, but they are insignificant in comparison with Mark's power of graphic portrayal of scene, for he has real mastery here. The little stories that deceive us at first by their brevity as they pass so swiftly before us reveal that power of imaginative reconstruction of scene that is the narrator's choicest gift.

Let us examine some of these narrative bits. First, that brief tale with which the story of the ministry opens, Jesus' call of the four disciples:

And passing along *by the sea of Galilee*, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon *casting a net in the sea*; for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they *left the nets*, and followed him. And going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, *who also were in the boat mending the nets*. And straightway he called them: and *they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants*, and went after him. (Mark 1:16-20)

The story is distinguished first of all for its economy of phrase. Could it be compressed into smaller compass? Spare as it is, however, it makes an unforgettable picture that has challenged many an artist to paint it. If Mark's

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narrative were, as some have suggested, a mere skeleton outline, a sort of scaffolding on which a story might be built, all the italicised words here would have been omitted. But Mark chose instead to bring the picture up before us, and he has done it with great skill.

We may illustrate in another way Mark's feeling for the pictorial elements in a story. Here are two versions of the incident of Jesus stilling the tempest, Matthew's and Mark's. Matthew based his account on Mark's, but as he retold it, he dropped from it just the items that made the story so dramatic and lifelike in Mark.

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And on that day, when even was come, he saith unto them, Let us go over unto the other side. And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him. And there ariseth a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, inso-much that the boat was now filling. And he himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion: and they awake him, and say unto him, Teacher, carest thou not that we perish? And he awoke, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? (Mark 4:35-41)

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And when he was entered into a boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, inso-much that the boat was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Save, Lord; we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. And the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him? (Matt. 8:23-27)

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The story of the temptation of Jesus as given in Mark is another case in point. The subjective content of the experience is not told here, but what is given is not merely a notation of the fact that a temptation occurred. The actual nature of the experience is conveyed to us by those few trenchant phrases that suggest so much more than they say:

And straightway the Spirit *driveth* him forth *into the wilderness*. And he was in the wilderness *forty days tempted of Satan*; and he was with the *wild beasts*; and the *angels ministered unto him*. (Mark 1:12-13)

Mark loves little details of movement and of feeling that give life to the people and scenes with which he deals. In the story of the healing of the deaf and dumb man, Mark says of Jesus that he

took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha. (Mark 7:33-34)

He alone gives the picturesque little story of the healing of the blind man in Bethsaida which concerns itself with the details of Jesus' taking the man by the hand and leading him out of the village, with the physical movements of the process of healing and with the eager dialogue:

Seest thou aught?

And he looked up, and said, I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking. (Mark 8:22-26)

Only Mark mentions the detail of Jesus' taking the child in his arms as he taught the duty of childlikeness. Only

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he speaks of Jesus' indignation when the disciples were for holding the children back from him. It is Mark who supplies the details which allow us to visualize the meeting between Jesus and the rich young man: the young man *running* to Jesus and *kneeling*, Jesus *looking upon him and loving him*; the young man's response,—“his countenance fell,”—and his going away “sorrowful.” Only Mark makes the pitiful condition of the epileptic boy something that we can hear as well as see by mentioning the grinding of his teeth. Only he speaks of Jesus' deep sigh when the Pharisees ask him for a sign.

All three of the synoptic writers tell the story of the healing of the blind beggar Bartimæus, but it is only Mark who includes the vivid detail of the beggar's haste in responding to Jesus:

And he, casting away his garment, sprang up and came to Jesus.

Mark loves also little details of setting, tiny pictorial items that bring the scenes before the eye. He supplies the details of the green grass and the gathering by companies of fifties and hundreds at the feeding of the five thousand, of the cushion in the stern of the boat on which Jesus was sleeping at the time of the sudden storm.

In other cases Matthew or Luke or both have retained the picturesque touches, but the responsibility for them of course goes back to Mark from whom they derived them: the tumult and the wailing in the house of Jairus, the scornful laughter of the people when Jesus affirmed that Jairus' daughter was not dead, Jesus' white and shining garment at the moment of transfiguration, Peter

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weeping as the cock crew, the singing of the hymn before the disciples went out from the supper to Gethsemane, and that strikingly vivid touch which brings the crucifixion scene before us:

And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads and saying, Ha!

Mark, of all the synoptic writers, loves best to report Jesus' contacts with persons in terms of direct discourse. We should of course expect this method in the reporting of the teaching, and it would also be the most natural way of narrating Jesus' encounters with his critics where question and answer would serve the purpose of dialectic. Where it surprises us is in instances where it serves no purpose of elucidating Jesus' thought, but is merely a way of bringing a scene more clearly or more impressively before us. Often Mark shows Jesus as performing his cures by a word of command:

Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house. . . .

Be whole and go in peace. . . .

Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. . . .

Come forth, thou unclean spirit out of the man. . . .

When Jesus stills the storm, this is the method,—a word of sharp command:

Peace, be still!

Dramatic situations are intensified by his direct questions or commands:

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Who touched me? . . .

Daughter, go in peace. . . .

Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.

Mark often heightens the realism of a scene by brief snatches of dialogue. In the story of the cure of the blind man at Bethsaida, we are brought to share the man's experience of gradually increasing sight by this means. An interesting instance of this direct way of reporting an incident occurs in the story of the healing of Bartimæus where the entire occurrence is conveyed to us through the words of Jesus, Bartimæus, and the companions of Bartimæus. One sentence for introduction and one for conclusion, and the rest is direct discourse:

And as he went out from Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timæus, Bartimæus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the wayside. And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say,

Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

And many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace:
but he cried out the more a great deal,

Thou son of David have mercy on me.

And Jesus stood still, and said, Call ye him.

And they call the blind man, saying unto him,

Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee.

And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus.

And Jesus answered him and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?

And the blind man said unto him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.

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And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.

And straightway he received his sight, and followed him in the way. (Mark 10:46-52)

But far above and beyond these minor qualities of realistic portrayal of scene should be noted Mark's power in a sustained narrative to rise to the level of great tragedy. The question as to whether Mark derived his passion narrative from *Q* or from some other relatively fixed source is unimportant here, for from whatever source he derived it he gave it a deep and moving quality which led Eduard Meyer to say of it that it is "one of the greatest creations of all prose literature."⁸ Simple, stark, unadorned by any interpretive line or comment, the great story unfolds in complete objectivity. No hint of subjective feeling obtrudes itself. The solemn meanings of the facts themselves leave us "purged with pity and terror." In its vivid realism, and tragic simplicity, it lives among the great pieces of writing that the race has produced.

And the soldier led him away within the court, which is the Prætorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothe him with purple, and plating a crown of thorns, they put it on him; and they began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote his head with a reed, and spat upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off from him the purple, and put on him his garments. And they lead him out to crucify him.

And they compel one passing by, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to go with them, that he might bear his cross.

⁸ Cf. Cadbury: *The Making of Luke-Acts*, p. 81.

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And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. And they crucify him, and part his garments among them, casting lots upon them, what each should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucify two robbers; one on his right hand, and one on his left. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ha! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests mocking him among themselves with the scribes said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reproached him.

And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elijah. And one ran, and filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to take him down. And Jesus uttered a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, who stood by over against him, saw that he so gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. (Mark 15:16-39)

A comparison inevitably suggests itself of this record of Jesus' death with that other supremely moving narrative of a great death in the closing paragraphs of the *Phædo*.

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But the comparison only serves to reveal to us how completely different in method the two stories are. The *Phædo* remains even in its story of Socrates' death a true philosophical dialogue, while Mark's story is a simple tale of genuine folk-origin. In the *Phædo*, Socrates remains the teacher of philosophy up to the moment when the power of the poison incapacitates him for speech. Jesus in his tragic silence is no longer the teacher; he has become the supreme Sufferer of the race, the religious self-giver, the Son of man who saved others, but himself he could not save. The *Phædo* is a far more subjective narrative than this one. The words of Socrates; their observed effect upon the group about him, the weeping of the servant, all tend to give relief to the emotion which the story evokes in us. In Mark, there is only the objective record of fact and word. No one weeps; no one expresses for us the feeling which the story stirs in us. Above all the silence of Jesus, except for his tragic outcry in his extremity on the cross, lays the burden of feeling on the reader with no relief for its tension. It is a story that stands alone in its tragic beauty, supremely restrained and simple, and for that very reason supremely moving.

Before we leave this attempt to sum up the characteristic qualities of this gospel, it will be well to ask the more comprehensive question as to the total view of Jesus that the gospel gives. Because men have been so accustomed to assimilate the three synoptic accounts of Jesus to one another, making a composite portrait from all three, the realization of the distinctive traits of each has often been lost. We ought, however, to remember that those who read this gospel first, had only this as a connected narrative of the life and work of the Master; and it might bring to

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focus our appreciation of its distinctive gifts if we tried to put ourselves in their situation. If Mark's gospel stood alone as the single integral record of Jesus bequeathed to us by the early church, what would be the picture of him that we should have?

Professor Burkitt once spoke of Mark's portrait of Jesus as of "a stormy and mysterious personage." It is certain that the tender and humanitarian aspects of Jesus' ministry to men are not emphasized here as they are in Luke. His place in history as the fulfillment of the high hopes of the past has no stress here as it has in Matthew. This is a bold and somewhat austere portrait presenting Jesus mainly as the man of Power.

Partly this impression comes through the gospel's stress on Jesus' marvellous deeds, of which we have spoken above. He heals when he wills; he walks upon the waves; he quells the storm; he assumes even the power to forgive sin; he knows no fear before those who cavil at his views or take him into custody. It does not disturb his composure when he hears of the unknown wonder-worker who is reported to be casting out demons without giving the credit where it was due. No competition can affright him, for he knows his power. He faces his captors in Jerusalem with a self-possession that made Pilate ask him, "Answerest thou nothing? Behold how many things they accuse thee of. But Jesus no more answered anything; insomuch that Pilate marvelled" (Mark 15:4-5).

Another way in which the gospel gives us this impression of Jesus' extraordinary power is by the constant reiteration of the wonder that he evokes in those about him. The crowds press upon him, blocking the door of the house where he stayed in Capernaum, leaving him no

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leisure even so much as to eat. The sick are crowded into the market places and "all the city" we are told "was gathered together at the door of Simon Peter's house." They follow him with such insistence that "Jesus could no more openly enter into a city but was without in desert places," and even there they come to him "from every quarter."

The effect of this crowding is twofold. In the country of the Gerasenes, "they were afraid" and "they began to beseech him to depart from their borders." But the more usual response is wonder and questioning as to how they shall think of him. At the opening of the ministry, the story of a cure closes with the observation that "they were all amazed." After the feeding of the five thousand, even the disciples were "sore amazed in themselves for they understood not concerning the loaves." When he calmed the storm on the sea, "they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" In his own country after his teaching in the synagogue, his countrymen discuss him:

Many hearing him were astonished, saying, Whence hath this man these things? and What is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses and Judas, and Simon? (Mark 6:2-3)

In the Decapolis, he asked that no reports should be made of his cures, but "the more he charged them so much the more a great deal they published it" (Mark 7:36).

This constant reiteration of the wonder on the part of the people becomes a sort of pattern for which the narra-

tive weaves a background. But it is a pattern of thought which the author himself shares; it is not something that he contrives. If Jesus seems here a figure of mystery, it is not because the author desired to present him so. It is not even because his sayings are sometimes enigmatic, nor wholly because of his wonder-working power. He is so because his greatness is beyond comprehension. The writer himself cannot comprehend him nor offer to the reader any measure of his stature. It is the honest judgment of the author himself that finds expression in the words of the centurion at the cross, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Any attempt to appreciate the gospel as a whole must take us back in imagination to the circle of its first readers. To be a Christian in Rome about the year 70 A.D. was to face soberly the realities of life and death. A little company of "the Way," for the most part poor and unimportant members of the great cosmopolitan society in which they dwelt, they must often have been in fear as they contemplated the possible outcome of their adherence to the new faith. The burning words of both the great leaders, Peter and Paul, had quickened in them an eager response; but now that high leadership had ceased, stilled in the violent death that the persecution under Nero had spread through their ranks. As they thought of their newness in the faith, they must have felt that Paul's figure of the branch of wild olive grafted on to the old root was a very apt one as applied to them.⁹ And as they reflected upon their isolation

⁹ If the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree; glory not over the branches: but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee. Rom. 11:16-18.

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from the society in which they lived, they must have longed for the spiritual securities that the old leadership had brought them. If suffering and perhaps death were to be their portion, they wanted the confidence that death would have victory in its train.

Into this atmosphere of thought and feeling came Mark's vigorous gospel, the first connected narrative of the life and words of the Master. Cast in heroic mold, it answered the needs of this community of Christians. Abrupt, vivid in portrayal, it arrested attention and challenged thought. Its view of Jesus as a vehicle of divine power was pertinent to their needs. Its climactic assertion "Thou art the Christ" brought them the assurance that they craved. Its dramatic portrayal of triumph through ignominy and death had power to lift their own suffering and obloquy to the level of greatness. Its concentration and urgency had a peculiar appropriateness for them. In its very tragedy lay its power to be to them "the good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God."

But the power of this writing is not confined to its effect upon the Christian community in Rome in the first century A.D. Successive generations of Christians have prized it not merely because they have found it, as Burkitt says, "the most trustworthy itinerary of our Lord's footsteps," not merely because it is known to be the source for Matthew and Luke, but because it lays hold on the affection of its readers by the vigor of its writing. By reason of the freshness and strength of its interpretation of Jesus it has a distinctive place in the library of Christian literature.

CHAPTER VI

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

A REAL forward step into the field of authorship had been taken in the circle of Christian beginnings when the book of Mark was written. This was the first attempt at organizing the stories and sayings of Jesus to make a connected and coherent narrative. But one can easily understand why Mark did not remain the only story of the life of Jesus. Mark presupposed on the part of its readers a considerable amount of knowledge of the general background of Jesus' ministry, and it did not assign any special place in its narrative to a connected account of his teaching.

As years went by, there was greater need for just these things that Mark had omitted. The early Christian groups, scattered as they were through the various cities of the Mediterranean world, had less and less touch with those who could tell them by word of mouth about their contacts with Jesus. Not only distance, but time was having its effect. The first generation of Christians was ageing and dying, and those presuppositions of general knowledge upon which Mark rested could no longer be taken for granted. The more the community expanded, the longer the span of time from the actual life of Jesus, the more Mark's omissions were missed.

As we try to think our way back into those early years, we can understand how the need arose for a relating of

the words of Jesus to his works in some more comprehensive way than had been characteristic of Mark. Jesus' words had been quoted again and again by Christian teachers, sometimes in their setting of story, and sometimes as isolated sayings. More and more they became the rule of life for the Christian groups. Instruction of new converts, encouragement of old, in the knowledge of what Jesus said about fasting, about keeping the Sabbath, about prayer, and about almsgiving was the characteristic task of Christian leadership. It is probable that many little collections of his sayings were made and committed to writing before the gospels were written. One such collection, *Q*, we have already considered in an earlier chapter. The very existence of a connected story of Jesus' life, as told by Mark, and these various collections of Jesus' sayings was a call to bring the two kinds of record into harmonious relationship with each other.

Furthermore, there was incentive to write a new story of Jesus in the differing needs of the various Christian groups. It was hardly to be expected that Mark, written with the interests of the Roman Church in mind, would be fully adequate for communities so distant and so different in background as those in Corinth, Ephesus, Athens, Philippi, Laodicea, Colossæ, Cæsarea, and Antioch. The vast geographical scope of the Gentile mission made it natural that more than one story should be written. In view of these conditions, it does not surprise us that by the time Luke wrote, he could refer to many who had "taken in hand to draw up a narrative." Only two of these many narratives have survived the years, Mark and Matthew, but the more we exercise such gifts of historical imagination as we can command, the less it surprises us that there were many who wanted to write a story of Jesus.

It is from this point of view that we can best approach the gospel of Matthew. Mark had already been for some years in circulation, was known to the author of Matthew and was used by him as the narrative basis of his story. He also had available to his hand another document, *Q*, containing the teaching of Jesus. To relate these two to each other was clearly one motive for writing his gospel. Again, he was probably urged to write by the fact that he lived in a community where the problem of the relation of Gentile Christianity to Jewish thought and practice had been important, and he had an interpretation of Jesus' messiahship to share, which he had thought out in relation to this particular problem.

These two motives appear quite clearly as we examine the book itself. The author gives us no statement of his purpose in writing nor does he indicate the plan and structure of the work, but the plan can be discovered as we read, and the plan throws light on the purpose. Because we have in the gospel of Mark the main source for Matthew's narrative, we can see how he arranged to combine this source with the other upon which he depended for the record of Jesus' teaching, namely the collection of Jesus' sayings which is now called *Q*.

A comparison of Matthew's gospel with Mark's reveals the fact that Matthew includes the same stories that Mark does, presents them in approximately the same order, and in a good proportion of his narrative, employs identical wording, or nearly so. But there is much more in Matthew than Mark's story. Most prominent of the additions are five large blocks of teaching material:

- (1) The sermon on the mount, Chs. 5, 6, 7.
- (2) Directions to the disciples,—both caution and encouragement, Ch. 10.

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(3) A group of parables about the kingdom, Ch. 13:24-52.

(4) A group of sayings and parables that have to do with life in the kingdom, Ch. 18.

(5) Parables about the coming of the kingdom, Ch. 23, part of Ch. 24, and Ch. 25.

Most of the material in these five groups we must think of as being before our author in the document *Q*. He reveals his plan or method of work, in bringing Mark and *Q* together by the use of a formula of transition which closes each one of these five blocks of teaching (7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, and 26:1): "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these words, . . ." It is as if the little formula helped him to adjust the two records to each other, and he said to us with it, "Now I am leaving *Q* for a time and returning to the story as told by Mark." This was the structural plan of the gospel, the uniting of these two strands of material about Jesus, keeping Mark's narrative as basic, but inserting these groups of sayings and giving them an integral place in the record of Jesus' life.

It is quite possible, as we have already indicated in Chapter II, that *Q* was not a single document, but several, and it is certain that Mark is not the only source for Matthew's narrative. Some other source than Mark gave Matthew the story of Jesus' birth, his little group of three narratives in which Peter is central (Peter walking on the water, 14:28; the appointment of Peter as the head of the church, 16:17-20; and the question to Peter about the temple tax, 17:24-27), his story of Judas' repentance and death 27:3-10, and of Pilate's assertion of innocence at the death of Jesus, 27:24-25. The bringing together of these records into a consistent whole was reason enough for writing this new

gospel. But another major motive emerges as we examine Matthew's story.

The author of this work had reflected carefully upon the meaning of Jesus' life and ministry and had an interpretation of them which he wished to share with his readers. One aspect of this interpretation is revealed in his repeated reference to Hebrew prophecy and its fulfillment in the events of Jesus' life. His birth in Bethlehem, the departure of his parents to Egypt, Herod's killing of the children because of his fear of the new-born infant, Jesus' boyhood in Nazareth, his residence in Capernaum, his healing of the sick, are all cited as occurring in fulfillment of words spoken long ago by prophets of the Hebrew faith. This practice continues through to the end, referring Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem, and Judas' return of the thirty pieces of silver, to Hebrew prophetic sayings.

This treasuring of the past and seeking to find ancient meanings in present events suggests at first a writer of exclusively Jewish feeling, one whose interpretation of Jesus would find its focus in his rôle as Messiah in the nationalistic sense. This gospel, we might think, is the story of the Messiah of Israel, a story centering about the fulfillment of those high hopes for leadership that Hebrew religious thinking had treasured for so many centuries. But actually, Matthew's interpretation of Jesus knows no such restriction. Strangely enough, the evangelist who was most concerned to show Jesus as the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy was also the one to lay most stress on the fact that he had been rejected by his own nation and hence had become the Messiah of the Gentiles.

It is Matthew who reports Jesus as saying:

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Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. (21:43)

and

The wedding is ready, but they that were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore unto the partings of the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast. (22:8)

These sayings and Matthew's treatment of Mark's story of Jesus' meeting the Canaanitish (Syrophœnician) woman reveal his thought concerning the reasons for the spread of the Christian movement outside Palestine and for its success on Gentile soil. We can easily understand how the turn that events had taken produced a problem of thought for the early Christian group. A crucified Messiah, Jerusalem destroyed, a movement that had come to no significant success in Palestine and had now found its real strength in Gentile cities and towns,—these were facts that might well cause a Jewish Christian to ponder. Matthew's gospel with its emphasis on Jesus as genuinely and unmistakably the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy, as one who came first to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24), but who found himself "without honor" "in his own country and in his own house" (13:57) and hence gave his mission into the hands of those who were to go and "make disciples of all the nations" is the first Christian writing to deal with this problem. It is because this problem is so central in Matthew that many have thought of the gospel as being written in Antioch,—a city Gentile in origin, but having a large Jewish colony,—where the

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question of the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christianity would naturally be prominent.

Another phase of this central question was also given careful thought by Matthew. Now that Christianity had taken up its life in Gentile lands, now that Jesus' words were becoming increasingly the rule of life of his followers, how was one to think of the relationship of his teaching to the Torah, which had been central to the old faith? Paul had made a large contribution to the solution of this question, but Matthew wanted also to make his story of Jesus reveal his own view of the ideal relationship between the two. As a good Jew, he believed in the old law and in its eternal significance for man's salvation. So heartily did he believe in it, that he could report Jesus as saying:

Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (5:18-19)

He is concerned to show Jesus as sympathetic toward the law:

Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. (5:17)

But Jesus, as Matthew portrays him, is constantly unfolding to his disciples a new law of the kingdom which is to have its place alongside the old law, and is to complete it.

For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,

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ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.
(5:20)

This new law is inward and spiritual. It has to do with attitudes and motives rather than with external acts. It lays stress upon angry and impure thoughts rather than upon the acts of murder and adultery. The contrast with the old law is clearly pointed out:

Ye have heard that it was said. . . . *But* I say unto you. . . . (5:38)

The new law really supersedes the old, and yet it has continuity with it. The old is valid, but the new both completes and transcends it.

This view of Jesus' Messiahship as passing from national to universal significance, and of his teaching as providing a new Law which, though it had continuity with the Torah, still went far beyond it, must have taken shape in the author's mind because of actual events that he had witnessed. He had seen the church become primarily a Gentile movement. He had seen the Christian communities taking up the words of Jesus as their rule of life. The church's answer to questions of conduct, both individual and social, was not in the Torah but in the sayings of Jesus. Now one who had pondered on the meaning of these changes for his own religious life and thought took up the task of bringing together the story of Jesus' life and his teaching, treating them both as part of a developing sequence in history, and setting them in perspective as organically related to Hebrew faith.

To this task, Matthew brought genuine literary skill. His gospel is no mere patching together of Mark and Q,

but a work showing distinctive gifts of both editorship and authorship. He is never slavish in his handling of Mark's narrative. Though he follows it closely for the most part, he does not hesitate to correct Mark's redundancy (*Cf.* Mark 1:42 and Matt. 8:3) nor to arrange the stories in different order. Chapters 8 and 9 of Matthew, as compared with the corresponding material in Mark, reveal Matthew's freedom to rearrange the stories and make new combinations of them.

But Matthew's gifts of editorship are most clearly revealed in the five blocks of teaching material which he derived mainly from *Q*. Luke also included much of the same material in his gospel, and our appreciation of Matthew's editorial skill is quickened by a comparison of the methods the two evangelists employed. Luke leaves the *Q* material in a form closer to that in which it came to him, either as isolated sayings or connected with the story material which gives the setting in which it was spoken. But Matthew brings out the kinship in meaning in the various items of teaching by grouping them. Thus, the sermon on the mount in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, probably contains some material actually given by Jesus as a sermon, but to this sermon has been added teaching related to it which was delivered at other times. Again Chapter 10 is a collection which summarizes the duties of Christian leadership. Chapter 13 groups together the parables about the kingdom. Chapter 24:25-Ch. 25 collects apocalyptic teachings, much of which Luke has reported as given on separate occasions. Matthew's grouping of them helps us to feel their relatedness and to realize more fully how comprehensively they deal with the religious and ethical life.

The values of Matthew's method are perhaps most

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clearly perceived as one studies the sermon on the mount. The sermon is by no means a mere gathering together of unrelated teachings. It is a spiritual and artistic unity, presenting an inclusive ideal for human life, an ideal summed up in the new law of the kingdom. It blends into an indissoluble whole the ethical and religious aspects of the good life. It sees ethical perfection as realizable, but only through the appropriation of a religious fellowship: Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (5:48)

The weight of these teachings would be great in whatever arrangement they were received, but it was a real sense for spiritual values, a real penetration into the meaning of Jesus' teaching that led Matthew so to group them as to reveal their comprehensiveness and universal adequacy.

Again, the strength of Matthew's method is revealed in his record of Jesus' denunciation of the sins of the Pharisees in Chapter 23. In Matthew, this chapter is a sustained piece of eloquence, intense and climactic, closing with a dramatic turn from the passionate denunciation of the seven woes to the tender yearning of those singing lines:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets,
and stoneth them that are sent unto her!
how often would I have gathered thy children together,
even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,
and ye would not!

In Luke, much of the same matter is given, but some of it is in Chapter 9, some in Chapter 11, and the final lament over Jerusalem appears in an entirely different setting in Chapter 13. In their several settings, these pieces are elo-

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quent, but they lack the dramatic intensity of Matthew's presentation of them. Here one feels the force of continuity, the impressiveness of refrain, the appeal of contrast, and a sense of culmination in the supplicating lines about the city.

Another characteristic excellence of Matthew's presentation of Jesus' teaching appears in his feeling for its poetic form. Of the three synoptic writers he is the one who pays most heed to the poetic parallelism of the sayings and who preserves with most care their balances and refrains. Professor Burney's studies¹ have done much to bring about an understanding of the relationship between the form of Jesus' teaching and the parallelism of Semitic poetry. Naturally the poetic mode of speech clung to the memory of those who heard the sayings, and as the teaching was transmitted it remained in that form. All three of the evangelists frequently retain it:

Love your enemies,
do good to them that hate you,
bless them that curse you,
pray for them that despitefully use you.
To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek
offer also the other;
and from him that taketh away thy cloak
withhold not thy coat also. (Luke 6:27-29)

For whosoever would save his life shall lose it;
and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake . . . shall
save it. (Mark 8:35)

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit;
but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. (Matt. 7:17)

¹ Cf. Burney: *The Poetry of Our Lord*.

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It is noticeable, however, as one compares the three, that Matthew's feeling for the parallelism is stronger than that of the other two. A striking example of this is seen in the form in which the beatitudes appear in Matthew, as compared with Luke's record of them:

Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn:
for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek:
for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they that hunger and
thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful:
for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers:
for they shall be called sons of
God.

Blessed are they that have been
persecuted for righteousness'
sake:

for theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.

Blessed are ye when men shall
reproach you,
and persecute you,
and say all manner of evil
against you falsely, for my
sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad:
for great is your reward in
heaven.

(Matt. 5:3-11.)

Blessed are ye poor:
for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are ye that hunger
now:
for ye shall be filled.

Blessed are ye that weep now:
for ye shall laugh.

Blessed are ye, when men shall
hate you,
and when they shall separate
you from their company, and
reproach you,
and cast out your name as evil,
for the Son of man's sake.

Rejoice in that day, and leap for
joy:
for behold, your reward is great
in heaven.

(Luke 6:20-23.)

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Surely the perfect parallelism in Matthew's version has been one cause for its being far better known and loved than Luke's.

The sermon on the mount offers many examples of this poetic form of speech:

Be not anxious for your life,
what ye shall eat,
or what ye shall drink;
nor yet for your body,
what ye shall put on.
Is not the life more than the food,
and the body than the raiment? (Matt. 6:25)

No man can serve two masters:
for either he will hate the one,
and love the other;
or else he will hold to one,
and despise the other.
Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matt. 6:24)

Enter ye in by the narrow gate:
for wide is the gate,
and broad is the way,
that leadeth to destruction,
and many are they that enter in thereby.
For narrow is the gate,
and straitened the way,
that leadeth unto life,
and few are they that find it. (Matt. 7:13)

Matthew loves this balance not only in single sayings, but in the larger units of paragraph or strophe. It is interesting to note the perfect orderliness of Matthew's arrangement of Jesus' teaching on fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Here are three units of teaching on similar themes, of equal length (except for the one on prayer, which introduces the extra section giving the Lord's prayer), all presenting the major teaching of sincerity in acts of worship. Each is introduced by the phrase:

When therefore thou doest alms . . .
When ye pray . . .
Moreover when ye fast . . .

Each describes the practice of the hypocrites, and each employs the phrase:

Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

and each closes with the statement that the true reward of those who perform the act sincerely is from God:

Thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall recompense thee.

Matthew loves also to keep refrains or repetitions that give impressiveness to the spoken words of Jesus: Notice the effectiveness of the repetition in the following passage:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth,
where moth and rust consume,
and where thieves break through and steal:
but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust doth consume,
and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
for where thy treasure is,
there will thy heart be also. (6:19-21)

And we cannot help preferring Matthew's version of the story of the house built upon the rock, for just this quality in it. The invulnerability of the house is borne in upon us by the repetition of the phrase:

MATTHEW

and the rain descended,
and the floods came,
and the winds blew,
and beat upon that house;
and it fell not:
for it was founded upon the rock.

.

and the rain descended,
and the floods came,
and the winds blew,
and smote upon that house;
and it fell:
and great was the fall thereof. (7:25; 7:27)

Effective use of repetition can be seen in many of Jesus' sayings as reported by Matthew:

Think not that I came to destroy the law and the prophets:
I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. (5:17)

Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled;
and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted.
(23:12)

Ask and it shall be given you;
seek, and ye shall find;
knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
for everyone that asketh receiveth;
and he that seeketh findeth;
and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. (7:7-8)

We should not forget that the form of these teachings has in many cases been determined not by the author of the gospel but by the faithfulness of some earlier docu-

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

ment in preserving the actual words of Jesus. But from the point of view of those who read the gospels today, it is important to recognize Matthew's part in preserving them up to the present. In many cases, it is he alone who keeps their perfect balance and symmetry. It was his own poetic feeling that made him realize the finality of their form, and treasure them as bits not only of eternal truth, but of eternal beauty. It is Matthew who preserves most carefully the balance of phrase in that loveliest of all expressions of God's fatherly care for man:

Behold the birds of the heaven,
that they sow not,
neither do they reap,
nor gather into barns;
and your heavenly Father feedeth them.
Are not ye of much more value than they?

.

Consider the lilies of the field,
how they grow;
they toil not,
neither do they spin:
yet I say unto you,
that even Solomon in all his glory
was not arrayed like one of these.
But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field,
which today is,
and tomorrow is cast into the oven,
shall he not much more clothe you,
O ye of little faith? (6:26-30)

And only Matthew gives us the beautiful summary of the mission of Jesus:

MATTHEW

Come unto me, all ye that labor
and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you,
and learn of me;
for I am meek and lowly in heart:
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
For my yoke is easy,
and my burden is light. (11:28-29)

Our examination of this second story of Jesus has shown us that its author had two important qualifications for his task. He had a new understanding of Jesus to share,—a new interpretation of history to give, which placed the life of Jesus in perspective, as related to the Jewish past and to the rapidly expanding Gentile mission. He had also a signal gift at editorship, and a feeling for form that made his story not merely a piecing together of Mark's narrative with the collected sayings of Jesus, but a literary whole with structure and distinctive gifts of form. Of all the evangelists Matthew responded most to balance and symmetry, had the keenest appreciation of poetic beauty, and the strongest feeling for the finality of the fitting phrase. A sensitiveness to both religious and æsthetic values lay behind this work, with its thoughtful placing of the life of Jesus in the scheme of history, and its study to preserve the eternal beauty of his teaching.

CHAPTER VII

LUKE—ACTS

A. THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

WE have been following the growth of the Christian literature from very simple and unstudied beginnings, in little anonymous collections of stories and sayings, to works that show at least the rudiments of self-conscious authorship and design. Artless as Mark and Matthew are, when measured by modern standards of biography, they represent a considerable literary advance upon their predecessors, those collections of Jesus' sayings, and tales of his doings upon which the gospels depended. For Mark and Matthew were literary wholes, and each revealed something of structural plan and guiding purpose in the arrangement of the story.

Now as we come to the gospel of Luke and its companion volume, Acts, we find that the business of authorship had progressed even further and had indeed entered upon a new stage. For Luke takes up his writing with a preface that shows a clearly formulated purpose:

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee

in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed.

The opening lines of Acts refer to this "former treatise" and unite the two volumes in a common dedication to Theophilus. Together these little prefaces reveal a purpose to tell a story both of the life of Jesus and of the movement that followed him that should be both accurate and orderly. They are the words of one whose critical judgment has been exercised upon the already existing records, and of one at home in the cultural world of his day. For Greek writers of the Hellenistic age,—historians, essayists, scientific writers and others—often began their works with a few words of address to their readers, or to persons to whom the works were dedicated. Luke's use of such introductory lines marks him not only as viewing his task with critical eyes but as being versed in the methods for his craft as they were practiced in the Greek world.

The three gospels show an interesting progress in this respect. Mark's abrupt thrust into his narrative with "John came" indicates little consciousness of what would be expected in literary circles from the biographer or historian. Matthew shows more concern to give background and perspective to his story of Jesus by including a genealogy and a series of birth stories, and by interpreting Jesus throughout his record in relation to Jewish religious thought. Luke has gone much further than either, in composing this preface which defines his aim, conforms to Greek literary custom of his day, and exhibits in itself real excellence of style.

But Luke's advance over his predecessors in this respect is not confined to his introductory statement. His purpose

as historian is really carried into action in the body of his narrative, in his concern to place the life of Jesus in relation to the interests and events of the Empire. His story opens with a notation about the political situation:

There was in the days of Herod, king of Judæa, a certain priest. . . . (1:5)

Having completed his story of the birth of John the Baptist, he turns again to the larger backgrounds of Jesus' life, and prefaces the birth stories with a note about the situation in the Empire:

Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrolment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. (2:1-2)

That the accuracy of this citation has to be called in question does not alter the fact that its presence testifies to Luke's conception of the historian's task. He wanted to give his readers an adequate understanding of the historical setting in which Jesus' life was lived.

But his most complete notation of this sort is at the beginning of Chapter 3:

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituræa and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. (3:1-3)

Could he have done more for his reader than he has done here, citing Roman emperor, local governor, provincial

prince, and Jewish high priest? This seems to represent Luke's idea of the complete orientation of his reader in the political background of Jesus' life, for he does not again in the gospel (except incidentally at 3:18) make definite citation of political events.

These little summaries of the political situation are not, however, his only way of connecting his story with the Roman official world. One of his interests in writing his two-volume work seems to have been a concern to show both Jesus and the movement that followed him as in no way offending official Rome. At Jesus' trial Luke reports Pilate as publicly stating his innocence:

I find no fault in this man. (23:4)

and as "desiring to release" him (23:20). Luke also reports that Pilate responded to the people's demand that Jesus be crucified, with a fuller exoneration of him than either Matthew or Mark had reported:

Why, what evil hath this man done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him and release him. (23:22)

It is not only in the gospel, but in Acts as well that this tendency appears. The Christian community is repeatedly shown to have been innocent of offense against Roman law. Paul was several times brought before Roman officials, but each time was shown to be clear of any serious charge. Claudius Lysias sent Paul on to Felix with a letter saying that Paul had "nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds" (23:29). Festus and Agrippa in conference said to each other, "This man doeth nothing

worthy of death or of bonds" (26:31), and Agrippa made explicit affirmation of his innocence:

This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed to Cæsar. (26:32)

The number and the explicit character of these references to the Empire suggest that at least one motive for the writing of this story was to place Jesus and the Christian movement in relation to the life of the Empire, and in so doing to show both Jesus and the new religion as in no way incurring the disfavor of the Roman government.

These suggestions of the author's motive for writing help us to find our way back into the situation in which this two-volume work arose. If the view is right which we accepted in Chapter IV, that it was written by Luke, "the beloved physician," Paul's companion and friend, it came from one who had been close to the early missionary enterprises of Christianity; one who, himself a Gentile, had seen Christianity making its first rapid strides on Gentile soil. His close participation in the movement and his own Græco-Roman background both had a part in the motivation of his writing. Both made him peculiarly aware of Christianity's status in the western world, and made him eager to commend and further it. Being, as his preface reveals, something of a critic of the earlier writings about Jesus, he felt there was a place for a new story, more comprehensive than the earlier ones because it would chronicle not only the life of Jesus but also the life of the early church; "more accurate" than they because it would definitely seek to place the movement in relating to the Empire, and more persuasive to the Greek world because it would show how innocent the movement had been held

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to be by those officials of the Empire who had been called into judgment upon it. Perhaps these motives were not all clearly formulated in the author's mind, but that they emerged in his writing, we can hardly doubt as we see what he wrote.

As to the materials that Luke had at his command from which to shape his work, his own suggestion in his preface points to a number of written records upon which he could draw. Like Matthew he had both Mark and *Q* on which to base his gospel. Perhaps his version of *Q* was somewhat different from the one that Matthew had used. If so, that would help us to understand some of the differences that appear in the two gospels as they record the teaching of Jesus. And for the second volume, Acts, he had two valuable documents which we have already examined in Chapter IV—his own diary of his travels with Paul, and a collection of stories about the early church.

For the rest, it is difficult to say with any certainty how much came to him in written form, but it is clear that he had much more material on which to draw, either written or oral. As regards the latter part of his narrative in Acts, he had, for at least some of the events he narrated, his own fund of recollections. For the remainder, those who think of the additional material as coming to Luke in oral form have suggested an appropriate time and occasion for him to have gathered his stories together. They suggest that Luke, having accompanied Paul on his last journey to Jerusalem, had leisure during Paul's imprisonment in Cæsarea for inquiry of those who had known Jesus or had themselves been members of the early Christian group in Palestine, and that stories thus collected enriched both his gospel and his chronicle.

Canon Streeter¹ has, on the other hand, proposed a different view of the growth of the gospel. He thinks of the unique material in the gospel as having been already formulated into a written document, to which he gives the title, Proto-Luke, and suggests that the final process of authorship was not the adding of *Q* and other material to Mark, as had been the case with Matthew, but an assimilating of Mark and *Q* to this Proto-Luke, which thus became the structural work underlying the present gospel of Luke.

All such attempts to trace the growth of the materials into their present form are helpful to us in our understanding of the books, but the major interest of our study is not so much in the question as to where the author got his materials as in what he did with them, having got them. In whatever form these sources came to Luke, by whatever steps they came into his possession, we owe the final result in the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts to a creative process of editorship and authorship which gave them their richness and charm.

Let us look first at the gospel to see what characteristics it manifests that distinguish it from its predecessors and that have made it so loved by generations of Christians. First, as to its plan,—Luke, like Matthew, followed Mark (this is the most commonly accepted view) and adapted *Q* to Mark as a foundation scheme for his story. But he arranged the sayings of Jesus that he got from *Q* quite differently from the way in which Matthew had treated them. Instead of the five blocks of teaching, each followed by the little closing formula, which we found in Matthew, we discover here that there are two long sections (Luke

¹ B. H. Streeter: *The Four Gospels*.

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6:20-8:3 and Luke 9:57-18:14) which contain much of the same material that Matthew had given in his five sections, but in a different arrangement. Here the various units of teaching are kept in their relation to incident instead of being grouped into related wholes as was the case in Matthew.

For instance, in one of the sections in Luke we find the record of Jesus teaching the Lord's prayer to his disciples. In Matthew, this teaching was grouped with others on prayer and formed part of a little discourse on the three acts of worship, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, which was given as a section of the sermon on the mount. Here in Luke, it is given its own separate setting of incident in the narrative of Jesus' life:

And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation. (Luke 11:1-4)

So far as the question of editorship is concerned, Luke is freer than Matthew in his use of Mark. He omits more of Mark's narrative than Matthew does, and he does not hesitate to infringe on Mark's order when he wishes. For example, he omits Mark's second story of the feeding of the multitude, doubtless because he interprets it as a second version of one already told, and he has transformed into a parable the narrative of the withered fig tree and placed it

in a different setting. (See Luke 13:6-9, and compare with Mark 11 and Matthew 21.)

In his use of *Q*, on the other hand, Luke is less free than Matthew. Matthew put his most skilled editorial work into the arrangement of the material that he got from *Q*, making the five groups of related teaching, and in one case at least, that of the sermon on the mount, making by his grouping a significant contribution to our understanding of Jesus' power as a teacher. Luke is, however, content to take *Q* much more nearly as he finds it,—to let the little units of teaching remain in their setting of story and to allow them to follow one another in a long and more or less unconnected series in his two insertions of discourse material.

The effect of this method of procedure on the gospel as a whole is noticeable as we compare the dramatic structure of Mark with the resultant whole in Luke's gospel. In Mark, we found the confession of Peter at Cæsarea Philippi to be the point of climax in the narrative. At that point the falling action of the tragedy began. Then Jesus commenced "to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed." The following chapter repeats the warning of death awaiting Jesus, and from there the story marches swiftly to its inevitably tragic end. In these last chapters with their swiftness of action and their presage of inevitable calamity Mark's narrative partakes, in a measure, of the nature of Greek tragedy. For Mark, it would have been inconceivable to halt the narrative, as Luke did, with the long inset of teaching which has often been called the Perean ministry. For Mark, the impending doom at Jerusalem is now the

dominant factor in the dramatic structure of the tale. For Luke, it figured in no such compelling fashion. He could set aside the narrative, and allow it to wait for a long recital of teaching. This material is, to be sure, some of the most valuable that Luke gives us, and his inclusion of it is a great enrichment of his gospel, but its effect as arranged here is to lessen the sense of tragedy, and to loosen the threads that weave the pattern of the tale.

But if Luke is less aware than Mark of dramatic values in the structure of the tale, and less concerned than Matthew with the artistic values to be achieved in the editorship of Jesus' teaching, he has other kinds of literary strength that give his gospel pre-eminent excellence. He is, first of all, unsurpassed in his narrative power. We have commented on Mark's gift as a story-teller, especially in his feeling for graphic detail. Luke's story-telling power lies in a different field. He is often dependent on Mark for the pictorial bits that conjure up the scene for us. But his own unique gift is exercised in the portrayal of human traits and feelings. He understands and sympathizes with people and, of all the evangelists, is most skillful in suggesting by a mere word or phrase the essential characteristics or emotions of persons:—Anna, the widow, taking up her residence in the Temple and worshipping there devotedly night and day; Simeon, "righteous and devout," coming "in the Spirit into the temple"; the boy Jesus hearing the teachers in the Temple and putting his questions to them; his parents seeking him sorrowing; the woman of Nain mourning the death of her only son, "and she was a widow"; Martha cumbered with many cares and Mary sitting at her Lord's feet to hear his word; James and John impulsively angry at the inhospitality of the Samaritans;

the unnamed, half-hearted follower of Jesus who wanted to go home to bid his family good-bye; the one leper out of ten returning to express gratitude for his healing; Peter and John heavy with sleep at the moment of Jesus' transfiguration; Pilate protesting his innocence; and the two on the road to Emmaus whose hearts burned within them on the way.

A striking instance of Luke's understanding of and participation in the feelings of the people of his narrative meets us in his story of Zacchæus, the little man, belonging to an unpopular group who commends himself to Jesus and to us who read by his eager attitude and enthusiastic hospitality.

And he entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by name Zacchæus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, Today is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. (19:1-10)

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The little story is typical of Luke, both in its emphasis on human values and in its quaint phrases that enlist the reader's sympathy for the character about whom it centers.

Luke's interest in and understanding for people is revealed also in his unique collection of parables that deal with human situations and human feeling. We need only recall the parables that are told by Luke alone to realize how the concerns of human life,—feelings, relationships, affections, desires, and hopes—are paramount in interest to him and are genuinely understood by him. How real he has made these people to us and the situations in which they find themselves!—the host surprised at midnight by an unexpected visitor asking for help, the rich man setting great store by his possessions, but finding them meaningless at the oncoming of death, the builder ambitious to make his tower, but judiciously counting the cost before he begins. We understand the anxiety of the woman who has lost her silver piece and the yearning of the father whose wayward son has run away. We feel that we know the shrewd steward who managed to commend himself even to those whose debts he had to collect, Lazarus the beggar who triumphed in the end over the indifferent rich man, and the judge worn down at last with the persistent pleading of the widow asking redress. We know too the self-satisfied Pharisee with his correct prayers, and the humbly penitent publican, praying for forgiveness. And the Samaritan who ministered to "a certain man" in trouble has become all the world's symbol for benevolent action. As we pass these characters in review, we realize that they are among the best known and loved that literature affords.

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In this connection it is interesting to note how natural it is for Luke to mention little details of daily life,—the house and the articles in it, the lamp-stand, the broom, the writing-tablet; the occupations centering in it, sweeping, spinning, serving; food and clothing, grapes, salt, oil, wine, broiled fish, wallet and shoes, coats and cloaks; feasts and social customs, servants' relation to their masters. Matthew and Luke both tell the story of the healing of the centurion's servant, but only Luke characterizes the servant as dear unto his master. Only Luke records the saying about the duty of watchfulness for the kingdom which makes use of the figure of the eager servants waiting to welcome their master home after his marriage feast. Luke was always conscious of these little items that make up the background of human experience, and the story of Jesus as pictured in his mind was never removed from them by reason of its profound meanings.

This characteristic interest of Luke in human concerns finds its highest expression in his interpretation of Jesus. The Master in Luke's story is not primarily the figure of mystery and wonder that he is in Mark, nor yet as in Matthew the Messiah of Jewish thought taking up his rôle as also the Saviour of the Gentile nations, but is rather here the embodiment of divine compassion and sympathy. The keynote of Luke's interpretation of Jesus is struck in the opening paragraph of his treatment of Jesus' public ministry. Luke alone reports Jesus as reading in the synagogue in Nazareth the passage from the prophet:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the
poor:
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,

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And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

(4:18-19)

Jesus' word, "Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears" is his acceptance of the kind of ministry here described, and Luke's story is an unfolding of that purpose in both act and teaching.

Luke's story is true to this characterization throughout. It shows Jesus manifesting special concern for the unprivileged, sinners, publicans, Samaritans, women, and even women from especially unfortunate circumstances:

And behold, a woman who was in the city, a sinner; and when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster cruse of ointment, and standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. . . . (7:36 ff.)

also,

And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God, and with him the twelve, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuzas, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered unto them of their substance. (8:1-3)

It is characteristic of Luke to represent Jesus' healings as a manifestation of his compassionate interest in people. Notice how this sympathetic quality in him is suggested in the story of the widow's son at Nain:

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And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went to a city called Nain; and his disciples went with him, and a great multitude. Now when he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, there was carried out one that was dead, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. (7:11-15)

A similar characteristic manifests itself in Luke's report of Jesus' teaching. Here the points most emphasized are Jesus' attitudes toward wealth, toward intolerance, and toward exclusiveness. Luke's form of the beatitudes suggests his thought of Jesus as sharing in the cause of the poor as a social group:

Blessed are ye poor. . . .

Blessed are ye that hunger now. . . .

Blessed are ye that weep now. . . . (6:20-21)

It is only Luke who represents Jesus as explicitly rebuking intolerance:

And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. But Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against you is for you.

And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not

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receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven and consume them? But he turned and rebuked them. (9:49-55)

Only Luke reports the parables in which a member of the despised race of Samaritans is the exemplar of charitable service, in which a publican contrasts favorably in his worship with a Pharisee, and in which a rich man is condemned to hell merely for indifference to the sufferings of the beggar at his gate. Only Luke reports Jesus as giving the command:

When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; because they have not wherewith to recompense thee. (14:12-14)

These aspects of Jesus' ministry,—its compassion, its concern for the poor and unprivileged, its tolerance,—as manifested both in act and in teaching seem to be of special interest to Luke.

As we note these emphases in Luke's interpretation of Jesus, we should not fail to take account also of the fact that Jesus' universal saviourhood takes a different place in Luke's thought from that which it had held in Matthew's. Matthew thought of Jesus as coming first to the Jews, being rejected by them, and hence becoming the saviour of the Gentile nations. With Luke, the division between Jew and Gentile figures far less. Himself a

Gentile, he sees these relationships in a new perspective. The divisions that matter most to him are not those between Jew and Gentile, but those that society sets up between poor and rich, governor and governed, privileged and unprivileged. He did not dwell on the passage of Jesus' messiahship from national to universal meanings. He thought of the Son of man as coming to seek and to save that which was lost wherever the lost might be. The genealogy that Luke chose to give traced Jesus' descent back to Adam rather than to Abraham, as Matthew's had done. Perhaps this is something of an index to Luke's thought of Jesus as quite naturally belonging to all the human family.

Luke's different perspective is also shown in his treatment of the classes within Jewish society. He views the scribes and Pharisees with more tolerance than Matthew. Rebukes that in the other gospels are addressed to the scribes and Pharisees are sometimes in Luke addressed to the multitudes in general. Once a condemnation of them is accompanied here by a characterization of them as "lovers of money" (16:14), a characteristic that would matter much more to Luke than their profession as such. Where Matthew with his strong feeling for Jewish tradition contrasts the new law with the old, in the repeated introductory phrase "Ye have heard that it was said, . . . but I say unto you," Luke seems quite unconscious of the need for adjusting Jesus' teaching to the Law, and reports Jesus as saying merely, "I say unto you that hear." As we should expect, his appeals to Hebrew prophecy are far less frequent than Matthew's.

Another distinguishing characteristic of Luke's interpretation of Jesus is its interest in the inner and spiritual

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life of Jesus himself. Of the synoptic writers Luke enters most fully into Jesus' attitude toward his work, dwelling especially on the element of struggle involved in it. The beautiful words that summarize the acceptance of the aim of humble service are chronicled by Luke alone:

I am in the midst of you as he that serveth. (22:27)

Though Mark has a close equivalent to Jesus' words about his baptism of mission (see Mark 10:38): "I have a baptism to be baptized with," only Luke adds those revealing words about the inner struggle entailed in fulfilling such a mission "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Again it is only Luke who reports Jesus' words about the tenseness of his own feeling about his work: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire, if it is already kindled?" It is only through Luke that we know of Jesus' words to his disciples "Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations" (22:28). Only Luke mentions Jesus' personal feeling about the sharing of the Passover meal with his disciples:

With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. (22:15)

Luke's awareness of the inner meanings of the story he tells is revealed also in his frequent allusions to Jesus' practice of prayer. He alone speaks of Jesus as praying at the time of the baptism (3:21) and at the time of his withdrawal to the desert to escape the multitude (5:16). When the disciples are called, Mark speaks of Jesus as going up into a mountain for that purpose, and Matthew merely lists the twelve, but Luke's version is:

And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God, and when it was day, he called his disciples; (6:12-13)

Again it is only Luke who mentions prayer in connection with the transfiguration experience:

And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered. . . . (9:28-29)

We have already mentioned in another connection the setting that Luke gives to Jesus' teaching of the Lord's prayer:

And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. (11:1)

If it were not for Luke, we should have missed Jesus' prayer from the cross:

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. (23:34)

and his dying words:

Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. (23:46)

This manifest interest in Jesus' inner life,—his conception of his mission, and his struggle to achieve it, and his practice of prayer,—is quite in accord with Luke's participation in the human meanings of his story, as we have

observed it in other connections. But it is also revealing of his thought about the nature of Jesus' messiahship. To Luke, more than to either Mark or Matthew, Jesus is a saviour through the very medium of character. He is both teacher and healer, a figure of divine power; but he is also, because of his own inner life, the Great Exemplar of the spiritual life. And this is a unique element in Luke's interpretation of Jesus.

Much of the charm of Luke's gospel lies in these elements of understanding of and sympathy for people, this insight into the human meanings of the tale he tells, this appreciation of character values. But there are other distinctive traits in his writing that should be noted. The peculiar beauty of the opening chapters of Luke's gospel are due partly, but not solely, to these qualities. We find in these birth stories of John the Baptist and Jesus a special revelation of the poetic feeling of the author.

The story of the shepherds is the highest expression of Luke's artistry. The tale is so simple that it has been traditionally childhood's first introduction to the Christian gospel. But it is profound in its meanings, and it is infused with reverent feeling, so that young and old alike respond to it. How naturally it blends the freshness of a pastoral tale, its quality of childlike wonder, with the deep import of its interpretation of Jesus! The rhythms of its Greek are beautiful, but the English translation with its monosyllabic stresses has made them even more pronounced. As we read the singing lines, we cannot wonder that the church has found them her favorite anthem:

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of

the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
 Glory to God in the highest,
 And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased. And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. (2:8-16)

The hymns which Luke includes in these early chapters of his gospel as expressions of the feeling of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon have come down to us through the centuries as part of the church's liturgy under their Latin titles, "the Magnificat," "the Benedictus," and "the Nunc Dimittis." Perhaps the mere formality of the Latin captions, together with the familiarity that repeated singing has brought about, has tended to blunt for us the tenderness of their feeling, and the beauty of their poetry. Mary's song gives high, poetic expression to the interpretation of Jesus' ministry that is characteristic of Luke's gospel:

He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.
 He hath put down princes from their thrones,
 And hath exalted them of low degree.

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The hungry he hath filled with good things;
And the rich he hath sent empty away. (1:51-53)

This song is full of personal feeling, and the expression of the deep meanings of Jesus' work finds its place in the midst of a really lyric utterance of the mother's joy:

My soul doth magnify the Lord
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath looked upon the low estate of his handmaid:
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me
blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;
And holy is his name. (1:46-49)

The Benedictus is the least personal of the three, but its closing lines give a lofty and beautiful expression to the prophetic conception of messiahship:

Because of the tender mercy of our God,
Whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us,
To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow
of death;
To guide our feet into the way of peace. (1:78-79)

Most touching and tender of them all is the little song of the ancient Simeon, who said as he held the child in his arms:

Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord,
According to thy word, in peace;
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples;
A light for revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of thy people Israel. (2:29-32)

Whether these songs came to Luke from some earlier sources, or whether they are an expression of his own literary imagination, their inclusion in his gospel is testimony to his poetic appreciation. If, as many think, the songs were already in use in the services of the church when Luke appropriated them for his gospel, he must then be honored as the first Christian hymnologist. Reminiscent as the songs are of Hebrew verse,—of the Psalms, of the prophets, and in the case of the Magnificat, of Hannah's song in I Samuel,—they still have a freshness of expression and a genuine applicability to their situation that makes their inclusion in the gospel a happy exercise either of authorship or editorship.

As we are seeking to understand and appreciate the distinctive qualities of Luke's gospel, we must not fail to note a pervasive quality that is more to be felt than analyzed. Of all the gospels, this one is most truly "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people." Less conscious of racial barriers than the others, less concerned with conflict, it tells its story in a mood of peace and joy to which the song of the angels to the shepherds is really a fitting prelude:

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men. . . .

Luke's narrative opens with the angels' promise of a son to Zacharias, couched in words of rejoicing:

Thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

It closes on the same note:

LUKE

And he led them out until they were over against Bethany: and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, blessing God. (24:50-53)

In this story, the effect of Jesus' ministry of healing is not merely wonder or fear, but exaltation of spirit. Jesus himself is said to be "glorified of all" (4:15) and the result in those who receive his help is that they "glorify God" (13:13, 17:15, 18:43 *et al*). The Seventy return with joy from their mission, and Jesus expresses his faith in their work in bold and dramatic imagery: "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven." The note of joy and triumph holds its own against opposition and even against the tragedy of Jesus' death:

And as he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame: and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. (13:17)

Even as Jesus approached the city for the last time, "the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God." (19:37)

It is not that Luke changes the course of the story, or suppresses details that have to do with suffering or tragedy. The apocalyptic element is indeed even more intense and ominous than in Matthew or Mark. But accompanying it, and transcending it is a sense of peace and calm, of buoyant confidence in the ultimate triumph of Jesus' cause that is perhaps symbolized in the little phrase, "with patience," which uniquely in Luke, closes Jesus' explanation of the parable of the soils:

And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast; and bring forth fruit *with patience*. (8:15)

“With patience” is true to the spirit of Luke’s gospel. For the outcome is secure. Discouragement or a sense of defeat have no place in the Christian gospel as interpreted by Luke. Even in his account of the apocalyptic discourse of Jesus which he derives from Mark 13, a version which elaborates the signs of distress and heightens the portentous element of the discourse, he affirms the ultimate triumph of Jesus’ cause with greater explicitness than either Mark or Matthew:

But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh. (21:28)

This confident faith is the dominant mood of the gospel. One might truly say that the author’s own feeling which urged his writing of the gospel is expressed in the lines of the song which he gives to Mary to sing:

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

In this examination of Luke’s peculiar gifts as an interpreter of Jesus, we have made no mention of his excellence of style, but we cannot read far in his gospel without realizing that he is the most finished writer of the three. Whether he uses the stately periods of his thoroughly Greek preface, or the simple idiom and sentence-structure of Semitic narrative that characterize the birth stories, or the easy, fluent, narrative style of the main body of his story, he shows himself at home and at ease in his task of

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authorship. He is the most finished and most versatile stylist of the three synoptic writers.

Luke, with his more consciously defined aims as an historian and biographer, with his broad sympathies and humanitarian interests, with his fine poetic feeling and his buoyant faith made a genuinely new and worthy contribution to the growing body of literature centering about the figure of Jesus. As we reflect upon the unique contribution that each of the evangelists made to our knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of Jesus, we find reason for thankfulness that many took "in hand to draw up a narrative" concerning him, and that out of the many, these three were treasured by the church, and hence are ours today.

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There are three parallel accounts of the life of Jesus in the New Testament, but there is only one chronicle of the early life of the Christian church. It is a matter of great moment to us, therefore, that Luke's thought of his task included not only a story of Jesus, but a record of the movement that followed him. "The Acts of the Apostles," as the early collectors of Christian literature called the second part of his work, stands by itself in the New Testament as the only piece of church history as such. It is, moreover, the only consecutive record from any quarter of those early years. Roman historians seem to have been quite unconscious of the Christian movement until it came to have importance in the Roman state, and even Josephus, the Jewish historian who is our main dependence for the history of the Jewish people in the time subsequent to that treated by canonical writers, has other

interests at heart than the chronicling of what was, to him, an unimportant and unorthodox sect. The letters of Paul and other New Testament writings throw light on many aspects of the church's life, but Acts remains our one consecutive record of the doings of the church in the Apostolic age. In this respect, therefore, we can hardly overestimate our debt to Luke.

Of Luke's fitness for this task, we have already taken some account. (See Chapter IV) He was a loved friend of Paul (Col. 4:14). He had travelled with him on some of his missionary journeys, had accompanied him on his final visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21:15), and was his companion during his imprisonment in Rome (Philemon v. 24). As we have already seen, part of the story that he had to tell was known to him through his own participation in the events he relates. Part of it probably came to him through his contact with people who knew of the events at firsthand. Part of it, we believe, came in a written record, a collection of stories, which we have already considered in Chapter IV, of those momentous days of high enthusiasm and eager expectation which followed the death of Jesus.

As we examine what Luke did with these memories and records, we cannot but be impressed with the result. His materials were varied and difficult to organize. The very bulk of the story called for ingenuity in subduing it to his hand and bringing it within the compass of a readable chronicle. As a Greek, he was much more at home in the story of the Gentile mission than he was in the record of the primitive church in Jerusalem, but he viewed his task as uniting these two elements, and he found the way to bring them into relationship with each other.

Above all, he must decide what aspects of the story should be emphasized, and it is here that we see exercised one of his striking gifts as an historian.

A mere record of the church's growth, in terms of numbers, lists of mission churches, and catalogues of names would have been a dull affair indeed. A record that centered its interest in doctrines, or questions of organization and policy would have had a limited appeal. One that took up the formal aspects of the church's relation to Jewish authorities and the Roman state, dwelling upon the technical issues at stake between them, would have been valuable to later historians, but it would not have been widely read, nor would it have contributed greatly to our knowledge of the inner life and spirit of the movement. What Luke actually did was to make central in his story the human aspects of the church's life, portraying with liveliness and spirit the scenes in which the great personalities of these early days had part,—Peter, James, John, Silas, Barnabas, Stephen, Philip, and Paul. In so doing, he made his story a real transcript of experience, and preserved for later ages the actual spirit and feeling,—the organic life of that early community. Because personal interests are paramount, the story has universal appeal. We of a remote and disparate age are called, as we read, into participation in the great scenes of the story, into a real sharing of the inner life and interests of the first Christian community.

This emphasis upon personal concerns seems to have constituted Luke's major principle of selection. But other points of stress appear also in the unfolding of the tale. At the beginning of the gospel, Luke gave a helpful statement of his purpose in writing, and we must think

of that purpose as in the main applicable to Acts as well:—to tell the story accurately and in orderly fashion, so that those who read may be confirmed in their faith both in Jesus and in the Christian movement. The opening lines of Acts unite this volume with the gospel, both by reference to the “former treatise” and by reaffirming the dedication to Theophilus.

But if we seek a separate statement of the theme of Acts, it appears incidentally in the words used in the second paragraph of the narrative:

But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (1:8)

Out of the many aspects of the church’s life which might have been selected by the author as significant and demanding stress, these are the ones he chose—the extraordinary power of the movement, the supernatural leading under which its affairs were conducted, and the phenomenal growth that it had already achieved.

The power of the movement is made everywhere apparent in the vivid scenes that pass in review before the reader. The disciples in Jerusalem and on their missionary enterprises compel attention by their eloquence and their energy. Prisons cannot hold them, nor councils effectually condemn. Authorities are powerless before the confident assurance that they maintain in every situation. Deeds of healing, swift and spectacular conversions, heroic acceptance of martyrdom, even the calling down of blindness and death on those who merit their disfavor, are some of the manifestations of the power that the disciples com-

mand. In Paul especially is this quality summed up and brought to full fruition. Boldness of speech, swiftness of action, effectiveness in personal relations characterize him in all his work. He commands the respect and admiration of the Gentile world so that even its officials look upon him as one who must not be gainsaid. Of one of its rulers, Felix, it is recounted that Paul's eloquence left him terrified. Julius, the centurion of the Augustan band, under whose custody Paul was sent a prisoner to Rome, treated him with not only consideration but deference. In time of shipwreck, it was Paul alone of all the ship's company who remained sufficiently calm and self-possessed to take command of the situation. Once this quality in him led to his being taken for a god. It is a dominant note throughout all the narrative, that these Christian leaders had in an extraordinary measure "received power." "With great power gave the apostles their witness" (4:33), and "so mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed" (19:20).

Again, the story is charged throughout with the feeling that this is a more than human enterprise. The Holy Spirit was behind and in all the activities that the chronicle relates. It was the Holy Spirit that came upon the disciples at Pentecost in tongues of fire, and in the sound as of a rushing, mighty wind, filling all the house. It was the Spirit speaking in the eloquence of sermons and in deeds of healing. Divine guidance came in the form of vision and voice, in dreams, and in light out of heaven. When success attended the missionary efforts of Paul, it was God who "had wrought great things among the Gentiles" (21:19). When danger lay ahead, the Holy Spirit gave him warning: "The Holy Spirit testifieth unto

me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me" (20:23). The immediate supernatural guidance under which his missionary activity was conducted is indicated in a variety of ways:

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of *the Holy Spirit* to speak the word in Asia; and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and *the Spirit of Jesus* suffered them not; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And *a vision* appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that *God* had called us to preach the gospel unto them. (16:6-10)

This sure confidence in the supernatural direction of the church's activities is epitomized in a quaint phrase in the letter to the Gentile churches regarding a decision on policy in the first church council: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (15:28).

The author is apparently deeply impressed with these aspects of the church's life, its manifest power, and the divine impulsion under which its leaders act. He is also amazed at its rapid growth, and its wide geographical spread. His wonder at its swift expansion is reflected in his frequent summaries of progress. The summary may be a mere notation of the enlargement of the circle of believers, such as the closing sentence of Chapter 2: "and the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved." It may be an estimate of the number in the group: "and the number of the men came to be about five thousand"

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(4:4). Or it may be in terms of the geographical area covered and racial boundaries crossed, as in the case of the note about the result of persecution:

They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord Jesus. (11:20)

The effect of these repeated summaries of growth is to awaken in the reader a wonder corresponding to that which the author himself feels.

In the latter part of the book, these summary sentences yield place to the consecutive narrative of growth that the record of Paul's missionary journeys constitutes. But here again appear frequent notations of successful results from his activity. In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas "so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed" (14:1). As a result of the second journey "the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily" (16:5). In Beroëa, "many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honorable estate, and of men, not a few" (17:12). In Corinth Paul "reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks" (18:4). This was the theme of the story: a movement marked from the first with extraordinary power, divinely instigated and guided, has had a phenomenally rapid expansion from Jerusalem to Rome. "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed."

The plan that the author followed was that of a simple chronicle, recording this growth step by step in the scenes in which the great personalities took part. Since persons are the central interest of the writer, perhaps it is not strange that the character of the narrative undergoes a change when Luke's friend and hero, Paul, enters upon the scene. At this point the story ceases to be a chronicle of the group life under various leaders and becomes a record of one man's missionary activity. The great leader's personality and doings are of such absorbing interest to Luke, and are held to be of such central importance by him, that he can think of the story of the church as summed up in these missionary journeys. Doubtless this seemed to him no desertion of his purpose to tell the story of the church's growth. But this concentration of interest in one man after Chapter 13 leaves us with many unanswered questions about what happened in Jerusalem and Antioch and about the later activities of Peter and John, Mark and Barnabas, and others. Priceless as this record of Paul is, we cannot but wish for equally full information about other sides of the church's life.

We meet a further question as to the author's plan in the strange conclusion that he gives to his story:

And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness, none forbidding him. (28:30-31)

If the concentration of interest on Paul was due to the fact that Luke thought of the Gentile mission as the heart of the church's life, why did he not return to the interests of

the group and give some estimate of the status of the whole as a result of the ministry of Paul? If, on the other hand, he was merely so absorbed in Paul that other interests sank into the background, why did he not wish to round out the story of his hero to a suitable conclusion? The suggestion has sometimes been made that Luke contemplated a third volume for his work that should tell of the later experiences of Paul and of the issues in the church's development to which his missionary journeys had led. But even for a single volume in a larger work this is a strange ending.

Some critics have thought that Luke wrote too early to know the outcome of Paul's trial at Rome, but such a solution of the question raises more problems than it solves. The usually accepted date for Luke's writing is about the year 90 A.D. some twenty-five or thirty years after Paul's death, when the whole story would be surely known. Another suggestion that has been offered is that the author's real goal had been reached in bringing the story of the gospel as far as Rome, and that in view of his evident desire to show Christianity as not giving offense to the Empire, we may think of him as thus closing his story in order to leave it at a favorable point. Had he carried it further, he must have recounted Paul's martyrdom. Leaving it as he did, he could give a last touch of the favor of the official Rome by speaking of the leniency of Paul's captivity,—his own hired dwelling, his visitors, his opportunity for preaching and teaching "none forbidding him," and the duration of this fortunate condition of affairs for two entire years. Canon Streeter thinks of this close to the book as a real climax, translating the final phrase "with absolute freedom and without

restraint.”² This is perhaps the most plausible explanation for the ending of the book, but it remains at best an unexpected conclusion to a work of such dignity and such proportions as is this two-volume history of the Christian movement.

For whatever reason it ended thus, the tone of the work is, like that of the gospel, such as to commend Christianity to those who read. Officials could prove nothing against it. Those who made up the movement were happy in it. In their group life, they “took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people” (2:46-47). Even persecution was not saddening to them because of their confidence that “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (14:22). When they experienced hardship, they rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name” (5:41). Stephen, falsely attacked, bore such radiance upon his face that they saw it “as it had been the face of an angel” (6:15). The buoyant temper that pervades Luke’s gospel permeates Acts also. When Paul, speaking to Agrippa, says that “this hath not been done in a corner” (26:26), he speaks in a vein that is characteristic of Luke’s narrative as a whole. The book is pervaded with a confidence that momentous things are being accomplished, so momentous that opposition could not permanently prevail against them, nor other concerns for long obscure them.

Part of the charm of the book lies in this buoyant temper that speaks through it. Just as is true in the gospel, the great certainties that govern the author’s thought overbalance the tragic elements. Martyrdoms have their

² *The Four Gospels*, p. 539.

place in the story, but death is swallowed up in victory. Luke's faith in the Christian movement, his admiration of and confidence in its leadership, his abounding hope for its future have set the tone for his writing, and the result is a book which is not a mere chronicle of events, but an affirmation of faith as well.

Thus far, we have been concerned with the general characteristics of the work,—its scope and purpose, its controlling ideas and attitudes. Let us now look within it somewhat more specifically, to see what is the nature of the stories that make it up. Already in Chapter IV, we have commented on the graphic narrative that Luke's diary afforded. The larger work profits by the diary's excellence in this respect, but lively and graphic portrayal of scene is by no means confined to the "we-sections." Whether this vividness of narration is due to Luke's power of selection from his own memories, or to the exercise of historical imagination, a skill in projecting himself into the events he relates, the result is the same. The realistic character of the narrative calls the reader into genuine participation in the scenes of the story.

The story of the silversmiths' riot in Ephesus is an excellent example of this narrative skill. How quickly the stage is set by the suggestion of the city "filled with confusion" and the people rushing "with one accord into the theatre," some crying "one thing and some another." The mob spirit is quaintly characterized by the phrase: "and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together." Demetrius, inciting his fellow-workers to action, and the town-clerk, appealing for order, are made known to us through their own words, with no explanations about them to complicate our direct acquaintance with them.

Motives are deftly hinted through suggestion rather than explication. With quick finality the tale comes to its end:

And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly. And after the uproar ceased, Paul having sent for the disciples and exhorted them, took leave of them, and departed to go into Macedonia. (19:41-20:1)

It is a good journalist's account of the kind of scene that a good journalist enjoys reporting.

We have already commented in Chapter IV on the lively and graphic portrayal of the scene of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem in Chapter 21. Again we have a vivid story of the action of an excited mob in the record of the events that followed Paul's speech: the anger of the audience at Paul's mention of the Gentile ministry, their cry of "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live," clothes torn, dust thrown into the air, and the chief captain silenced in fear when he learns that Paul is a Roman citizen. Other scenes that come before us with special vividness are those of the meeting of Paul and Barnabas with the priest of Jupiter and the people of Lystra, who brought garlands and oxen to do sacrifice before them thinking they were gods; that sharp contest at Ephesus with the seven sons of Sceva that resulted in the burning of the costly books of magic; and the lovely and tender meeting of Paul with the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, where after Paul's words of pastoral concern for them,

he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that

they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way unto the ship. (20:36-38)

As we follow the scenes that make up the story, we see that here, as in the gospel, Luke is master of the compactly descriptive phrase. Sometimes it is his way of characterizing people: Gallio caring for none of these things; Felix, timid and temporizing with his "when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me"; Theudas giving himself out to be somebody, Barnabas, a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, Paul, humbled in spirit at Damascus, "for behold, he prayeth," or best of all the dilettante philosophers of Athens who "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing." Sometimes the apt phrase appears as a swift appraisal of a mood or attitude: Paul, "kicking against the pricks," Peter "filled with the Holy Spirit" or Stephen whose eloquence in speaking was such that his opposers were unable "to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake." Sometimes the apt phrase helps to bring a situation swiftly before the reader, as in the description of the general sense of wonder at the swift growth of the church,—“Fear came upon every soul,” or in the phrase expressive of its unity of spirit,—“The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul,” or in the Thessalonians’ charge about the activity of Paul and Silas, that it was “turning the world upside down.”

Sometimes the succinct phrase is a little epitome of experience, as in Paul’s report of his conversion,—“Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision,” or Peter’s affirmation of his new tolerance toward the Gentiles,—“Of a truth I perceive that

God is no respecter of persons," or the little summary of the spiritual life, as seeking God, "if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." This power over economical and telling phrase is a characteristic gift of the author which is no small enrichment to his narrative.

One notes also how his sense for dramatic values leads him to make the most of contrast in the arrangement of his stories. The introduction of Paul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, follows almost immediately upon the story of Stephen, praying for the forgiveness of those who stoned him. The account of Paul proudly setting out with authorization from the high priest to bring men and women bound to Jerusalem contrasts strongly with the picture of him, entering the city, blind and helpless, needing the care of Ananias. The note about Barnabas who sold his field and gave all the money to the Christian group serves to heighten the effect of Ananias and Sapphira's cheap pretense. Paul suggesting at Ephesus the culmination of his missionary effort as, "I must also see Rome" stands in almost ironical opposition to his actual entrance into the city, a prisoner of the Empire. Sometimes Luke's feeling for dramatic effect makes him somewhat careless about details. His three accounts of Paul's conversion, for example, do not tally with each other as to the details of external happenings on that momentous day, but all of them are full of dramatic feeling and make their appeal to the reader through their penetration into the central fact of the experience,—the spectacular change that made Saul the persecutor of Christians into Paul the chief protagonist of the Christian movement.

These are all important gifts for the historian,—the

capacity for wise selection of material, the understanding of how to blend diverse materials into a planful and consistent whole, enthusiasm for the enterprises he records, the power of vivid portrayal of scene, command over succinct and telling phrase, and feeling for dramatic contrast. But there is another gift more characteristic of Luke than any of these. This is his understanding and sympathy for human beings. We have seen how the story centers in persons, how its situations are those that have human interest, how the advance of the church is recorded in terms of human endeavor and human achievement. But more than this, Luke knew how to portray character with a freshness of interest and perception, a warmth of sympathy that have made his people figures of perennial appeal. Whether their rôle is small or great, they are real flesh and blood, understandable in their motives, and true to the experience of us all. What a pageant of personality this story is, and how well we know these figures!—Peter, James, and John; Barnabas, Silas, and Mark; Stephen and Paul; Ananias and Sapphira; Philip, Cornelius; Dorcas and Lydia; Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila; Gallio and Sergius Paulus; the Philippian jailor and the chief captain of the centurion band; Felix, Festus, and Agrippa; Rhoda, the little maid, and Paul's sister's son.

If we ask the question as to how these persons have become so lifelike to us, part at least of the answer will be found in the fact that the author so often lets them speak for themselves. Even in the case of those who play but a small part in the story, this is the author's usual method of presenting them. The Philippian jailor cries out at the time of the earthquake, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The Asian Jews, appealing to their brethren in Jerusalem

for help against Paul, do so in direct speech, "Men of Israel, help!" The kindred of the High Priest in Jerusalem, accusing Peter, say, "By what power or in what name have ye done this?" We know Tertullus, the professional orator directly through his words of flattery to Felix, "Seeing that by thee we enjoy much peace, and that by thy providence evils are corrected for this nation, we accept it in all ways and in all places, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness" (24:2-3). Paul's critics in Athens question, "What would this babblers say?" (17:18) Philip and the eunuch, meeting, question each other, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" "How can I, except some one shall guide me?" (8:31) Paul and the chief captain in Jerusalem speak directly to each other:

"Tell me, art thou a Roman?"

"Yea."

"With a great sum obtained I this citizenship."

"But I am a Roman born."

It is partly because we meet them directly, that the people of the story have reality for us.

Occasionally a suggestion of motive helps to interpret them to us. The high priest and the Sadducees in Jerusalem oppose the disciples because they "were filled with jealousy" (5:17). Demetrius incited the silversmiths because he was fearful for his trade (19:25). The masters of the soothsaying girl at Philippi haled Paul before the magistrates because "the hope of their gain was gone" (16:19). Felix, hoping for a bribe from Paul, "sent for him the oftener and communed with him" (24:25). Festus left Paul in prison because he desired to gain favor with the Jews (24:27). Jealous for their rights in the dis-

tribution of community goods, Hellenistic Jews "murmured against the Hebrews" that their widows were neglected (6:1).

Human emotion also is felt by the writer to be a part of the story that is worthy of chronicle. Barnabas "was glad" when he had come to Antioch and had seen the grace of God (11:23). Peter's audience in Jerusalem was "cut to the heart" by his defense of his preaching (5:33). When Paul was in Athens, "his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols" (17:16). Rhoda, the maid, "opened not the gate for joy but ran in, and told that Peter stood before the gate" (12:14). The elders at Miletus sorrowed most of all for the word that Paul had spoken "that they should behold his face no more" (20:38). The sailors at the time of the shipwreck were all "of good cheer" after Paul encouraged them and gave them food. Paul himself, when he met the brethren at the Three Taverns on the Appian Way, "thanked God and took courage" (28:15). Luke's understanding of and participation in the feelings of his people is at least a part of the secret of their reality to us.

Most of all, Luke's gifts in the portrayal of character are lavished upon the portrait of his friend and hero, who is the central figure of the story. Paul's energy, his strategic planning, his aggressive missionary effort, his power as a speaker, his capacity for friendship, his magnetism as a leader, his vision and insight as an interpreter of the spiritual life have stirred Luke deeply, and he in turn stirs us to appreciation as he makes Paul live before our eyes. Without Luke's picture of Paul, we should have lost much of our knowledge and understanding of him. The letters reveal his thinking and his affection and concern for those

to whom he ministered. But here is the connected story of his doings and the revelation of the response he evoked in those with whom he worked.

Admiration for Paul dominates the narrative, but it does not gloss over the less admirable details. There is frank recognition of friction when it occurs,—the dispute between Barnabas and Paul over John Mark, the dissension with the conservatives in Jerusalem over the Gentile question, and Paul's "tears and trials which befell him by the plots of the Jews" (20:19). His fanaticism as a persecutor of Christianity is clearly indicated. His confession of passive participation in Stephen's death by "consenting and keeping the garments of them that slew him" (22:20) is not excluded from the story. Though he is always in Luke's portrayal the heroic figure, whose leadership is both the inspiration and the organizing force of a great religious movement, he is still a genuinely human figure. Little human touches like his thoughtfulness for the mariners and their need for food at the time of the shipwreck, and his own comfort at the welcome given him when the Roman Christians came out to meet him on the Appian Way contribute to the intimacy of the portrait. Paul's words to the citizens of Lystra about himself and Barnabas ring true to the reader of Acts, "We also are men of like passions with you" (14:15).

Out of the remote past this little chronicle has come to us,—our single connected narrative of the early days of the Christian church. Its freshness of spirit, its quaintness of expression, its lively portrayal of scene, its abounding interest in persons, its faith in and enthusiasm for the movement it records have made those early days our real possession. Exaggerations of the element of wonder there

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may be, minor inconsistencies as to details, naïve elements in its thought, but these fall into insignificance beside the spiritual achievement that it is as a whole. By its depicting of the inner life of the Christian community, it has enabled us to live again those momentous days.

As we look back now over these two volumes, Luke and Acts, we realize afresh what a signal achievement they were. This was the first attempt at writing Christian history on so wide a scale,—to chronicle both the life of Jesus and the beginnings of the Christian church,—a more ambitious project than any previous Christian writer had attempted. And Luke was one fitted both by native gifts and by experience for such a work. An artist, by temperament and feeling, he was skilled enough in the disciplines of writing to be historian as well.

About the middle of the second century, not long after Luke's time of authorship, the Greek satirist, Lucian, wrote a witty little essay on "How to Write History," and it is interesting to ask how far this bit of primitive history that we have been considering meets the canons set up by one who speaks from the point of view of the best literary culture of that day. Lucian said that the historian's spirit should be that of a poet, but that his treatment of his material should hold that spirit in check, as a horse is restrained by a bit and bridle. "It is best for the spirit to go a-horseback," he says, "and the expression to run beside on foot, holding on to the saddle so as not to be outstripped."³

Is not this just the combination of gifts that makes Luke's work so appealing to us? With his buoyancy of spirit, his faith and enthusiasm, his imaginative insight

³ *The Works of Lucian*, translated by H. W. and F. G. Fowler, Vol. II, p. 130.

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into personality and his sympathy for human concerns, he has the spirit of a poet. In his power of graphic portrayal, his concreteness of expression, and his simplicity and frankness in the handling of his characters, he keeps the rôle of historian. As we treasure his work that so truly reconstructs the past for us, we cannot but give thanks that his spirit did "go a-horseback," but that he was not only artist, but historian as well, so that the artist's spirit was held in check by the bit and bridle of concrete interest and honest desire to chronicle both "accurately and in order."

CHAPTER VIII

AN EARLY CHRISTIAN SERMON

JAMES

WE cannot help wishing for more information than we now possess about the nature of the meetings of the early Christian church. One visits the catacombs in Rome, and pictures in imagination the secret gatherings in those hidden, subterranean chambers. One learns of the discovery by archæologists of early church buildings in Corinth, in Jerash (the New Testament Gerasa) or in far-away Dura in the Euphrates valley, and one is able by such helps to reconstruct, at least partially, the meetings of the Christian community in the third and fourth centuries. Christian writings of the second century such as the *First Apology of Justin Martyr* and the *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, are helpful to us in reconstructing in imagination the services of worship engaged in by Christian congregations of that period. But for the New Testament period itself, we have only a few hints about the meetings of these earliest Christian groups. That some of their meetings were quite informal is suggested by the story of Paul's visit in Philippi (Acts 16:13) where we read of a meeting at "the place of prayer by the river" and of Paul's sitting down and speaking to the women that were come together. We know that some meetings took place in homes, for Paul refers to the church

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that met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:5).

As to what took place at these meetings we have a few suggestions. Paul urges that the Colossian letter be read aloud also in the church in Laodicea in exchange with the letter that had been directed to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16). The writer of Revelation assumes that his message is going to be read aloud, for he says:

Blessed is he who reads aloud, blessed are they who hear the words of this prophecy and lay to heart what is written in it.¹

We can imagine with what eagerness the messages of the great leaders of the early days were read and what a place their letters would take in the common life of the Christian groups. We know also that there were "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," for Paul counsels their use in his letter to the church at Ephesus. Some of those songs have been preserved for us in the book of Revelation. We can imagine those hymns sung by groups in Asia Minor, and perhaps in other parts of the Empire, as expressive of their high faith in the movement of which they were a part, and as giving courage and steadfastness as the phrases were chanted musically:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty,
who was and who is and who is to come. (Rev. 4:8)

The kingdom of the world
is become the kingdom of our Lord,
and of his Christ:
and he shall reign for ever and ever. (Rev. 11:15)

¹ Rev. 1:3, Moffatt's translation.

We know that the celebration of the Lord's supper was central in the worship of the early church, for Paul deals with it in his early letters as if it were already a thoroughly established custom (I Cor. 10:16; I Cor. 11:20 f.). By the time that Matthew's gospel was written a baptismal formula was in use:

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"; (Matt. 28:19)

and one cannot read this simple, dignified form without thinking of the impressiveness for the group of such a ritual of dedication for new members of the community. Paul speaks often of prayer and thanksgiving as part of the worship services of the church, and in one place makes it clear that he thinks of the collections for ministering to the poor as an integral part of the keeping of their holy day (I Cor. 16:1).

Nowhere in the New Testament is the sermon spoken of as a part of the common worship of Christians, but the presence in the collection of some homilies suggests that the spoken discourse had a place in such services. In general, we think of early Christian meetings as being modelled on the synagogue services, which were democratic in character, allowing those of the congregation who wished to do so to take part either in reading the scripture or speaking, as Jesus did in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16 f.). We know that public preaching was from the first a part of the Christian program of evangelistic work, for it was used by Peter, Stephen, and Paul. Some of their discourses are reported in the book of Acts; but as we have already seen, these reports are quite probably reconstructions by the author of Acts of the ad-

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dresses made, rather than verbatim records of the words of the speakers.

The book of James, however, is a genuine sermon, given to us as its author spoke it. Hebrews also belongs among the homilies rather than among the true letters, but it is not the popular type of work that James is. It was intended, as its author says, not for the rank and file of the church membership, but for those who had the leadership of their group; and in addition to this fact, it was modified somewhat when it was sent out to be read at a church distant from the writer itself. (See p. 176.) In James, on the other hand, we have a little discourse for the people themselves, one which we can easily imagine as being spoken with vigor by its author.

He enters without preamble upon a high note of appeal:

Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.

This vigorous, direct manner of speech is characteristic of the sermon as a whole.

The sermon is not carefully organized; it is rather a series of good, wholesome counsels, given somewhat at random. But such unity as it has comes from the fact that all these counsels have to do with the making of a good life. Here are discussed some of the basic problems of human conduct:—the handling of wealth, self-control, especially in speech, and the attaining of the Christian virtues of humility, wisdom, and a peaceable temper of life. The writer is most concerned lest the Christian em-

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phasis on faith should result in neglect of the more objective side of religion, for, as he says, "Faith without works is dead." His best work is done in his urgency for a Christianity that shall express itself in the moral handling of life:

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? (2:14)

Show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith. (2:18)

One wonders as one first reads this sermon whether the speaker of it felt that Paul had put too strong an emphasis on faith, and hence was aiming to correct, or at least, to supplement the gospel of the great missionary to the Gentiles. But when one reflects upon Paul's close linking of the ethical life with the central religious experience that he termed "faith," urging as he did so insistently the "fruits of the spirit," one cannot but feel that the writer of James is combatting not Paul but those who have misrepresented Paul's teaching, emphasizing one side of it at the expense of the other,—namely the necessity of faith as overshadowing the necessity for a moral handling of life.

These are the perennial problems of Christian conduct that this writer brings up for consideration. He speaks to Christians today as vigorously and as pertinently as he did to those of the first century. He might be speaking to the modern church when he deals with the temptation of churchmen to pay special honor to the man of wealth:

My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there

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come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing; and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool; do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren; did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him? But ye have dishonored the poor man. . . . Howbeit if ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well. (2:1-8)

His treatment of the persistent difficulty of talking indiscreetly, ill-humoredly, or too much, has the eternal pertinence of a classic discussion of the theme:

For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also. Behold the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder whither the impulse of the steersman willeth. So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith

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curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God: out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter? Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? Neither can salt water yield sweet.

Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. (3:1-13)

As the sermon deals with these persistent problems of life, it makes use often of a short, pungent, telling phrase summarizing in compact form a wisdom born of experience:

A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. (1:8)

The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace. (3:18)

Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. (4:8)

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you. (4:10)

To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. (4:17)

The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. (5:16)

Of this same epigrammatic character is the definition of religion, by which James is probably best known to Christian readers:

Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. (1:27)

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James does not hesitate to employ invective against the rich. Evidently he feels strongly their responsibility for the injustices that he himself has seen:

Come now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one; he doth not resist you. (5:1-6)

He is moved to ironical accusation as he thinks of those who profess religion but fail to give it its true expression in deeds of understanding and sympathetic charity.

My brothers, what is the good of a man's saying he has faith, if he has no good deeds to show? Can faith save him? If some brother or sister has no clothes and has not food enough for a day, and one of you says to them, "Goodbye, keep warm and have plenty to eat," without giving them the necessaries of life, what good does it do? ²

One reads this little sermon today with great interest for its sincerity, forcefulness, and real pertinence to the ever-recurring problems of the Christian life. As one pictures in imagination the Christian group that heard the sermon when it was first spoken, one realizes how practically help-

² 2:14-16. Goodspeed's translation.

ful it must have been. The urgency, the strong conviction behind it would make its words have weight. The popular character of the discourse, its random touching upon many themes suggests an informal setting for its delivery. We are reminded as we read it, of the fact that other groups in the Græco-Roman world besides the Christian were making use of popular preaching. The current schools of philosophy, Cynic, Stoic, and Epicurean had preachers who used the spoken discourse very effectively in the market place, or in other convenient places of assembly. Like James, they also drew their themes from the moral life. Often their discourses, termed "diatribes," protested against the insincerities, the injustices, and the superficial conventionalities of contemporary life. Not many of these sermons have survived the centuries, partly because they were so popular and informal in character, but we know about them through references to them in later writings and through their influence on more formal literary works. And two important Stoic preachers, Seneca, and Epictetus, both of whom were speaking and writing during the first century, have left us examples of this popular preaching form.

Any comparison of the book of James with these popular sermons of the Hellenistic world shows us that they had much in common, not only in subject matter but also in form. The orator's devices of rhetorical question, of short hortatory exclamation, of irony are employed in both. The random touch upon one aspect and then another of the moral life is the method of the diatribe as well as of James. Earlier New Testament commentators tended to find the literary affiliations of the book of James in the Wisdom writings of the Old Testament, particu-

larly in the book of Proverbs. It is true that James lives in the same world of thought as the proverb-writers. Both are concerned with the moral side of religion. But so are the diatribe writers and speakers in the Græco-Roman world. And so far as forms of expression are concerned, James is much more at home in the Hellenistic rhetorical world than he is in the world of the Jewish proverb-makers. True, James uses the condensed maxim as a summary of experience, but never except in actual quotation from the book of Proverbs, does the characteristic Hebrew parallelism of expression appear in James. Instead one finds the *viva voce* methods of the preachers of the Greek world, rhetorical question, hortatory exclamation, and the address to the imaginary opponent:

Who is wise and understanding among you? (3:13)

Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you? (4:1)

Speak not one against another, brethren. (4:11)

What is your life? (4:14)

Come now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city and spend a year there, and trade and get gain. (4:13)

If a man say he hath faith, but have not works, can that faith save him? (2:14)

The book of James is our best example of Christian preaching in a world where rhetoric flourished as one of the greatest games of life.

As to the date and the authorship of James we have little definite information. The book can hardly have been written earlier than the close of the first century. Its

moralistic tone belongs to a time later than the first decades when the church in the eagerness and enthusiasm which characterized the early days laid so much stress on the spontaneous and free working of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, James' championing of works as opposed to faith seems hardly to belong to the second century when Pauline thought had come to be held as sacred and well-nigh inviolable.⁸ The absence of any discussion of the content of Christian belief also suggests a time earlier than the second century when the church's greatest problems were those of dealing with heretical thought. It seems best to think of it as belonging to the closing years of the first century.

As to who its author was we have little clue. The superscription of the book speaks of "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion"—meaning, doubtless, to the Christians of the Gentile world wherever they may be. Did the author take the name James with the purpose of suggesting apostolic authorship for his work,—a custom common enough in literary circles of the day? Or was he really one who bore that name, a man of whom we know only this, that he was the author of a strikingly sincere and earnest Christian sermon? The early church chose to identify him with James the brother of Jesus, but the inner characteristics of the writing seem to deny its being written as early as such an identification would necessitate. We must content ourselves with knowing the author through this one work. By it we know him to have been one whose leadership was born of strong moral feeling, some one

⁸ See Scott: *The Literature of the New Testament*, Ch. XXII, and Moffatt: *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, pp. 470 ff.

who had in his background the vital experience of ethical religion as it had been expressed by Jewish prophetic and wisdom writers, but one who had been schooled in the rhetorical methods of the popular philosophical preachers of the Hellenistic world in the first century. Vigorous, robust, practical,—his interpretation of the Christian religion meant a strong, invigorating message as it was first spoken in some early Christian church meeting. And those same qualities of strength have made it capable of holding its place in Christian experience in all the ages since.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH MEETING PERSECUTION

HEBREWS

THE latter part of the first century found the church in conflict with the government under which it lived. From the beginning, its life had been complicated by adjustment to and interference from various official groups. Jewish religious leaders had opposed Jesus, and finally brought about his death. Jewish unfriendliness, appealing to Roman authorities had brought frequent difficulty to the life of the early church. Paul was repeatedly brought before both Jewish and Roman tribunals, and had finally met his death, we believe, as did Peter also, when Nero took action against the church in Rome. Other leaders of the Christian movement, such as James and Stephen, had suffered martyrdom.

But previous to the reign of the Emperor Domitian, there had been no consistent policy of the government to persecute Christians as such. Jewish opposition had been sporadic, occasional, and unregulated,—governed rather by individual, personal feeling or by mob action than by official policy. On the Roman side, even Nero's persecution, brutal though it was, did not threaten the life of the church at large. It was confined to the city of Rome, and was occasioned rather by caprice than by any considered policy of opposition to the group's activities. The charge

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brought against the group had nothing to do with their beliefs or practices as Christians. According to Tacitus, they were fraudulently charged with setting fire to the city, and the motive of the charge was to deflect the blame from Nero himself at whose door rumor was laying the crime.¹ Painful and distressing as that experience was for the Christian group, it was limited to one city and was of short duration.

At the end of the first century, conditions were much more serious for the church as a whole, for the persecution under the Emperor Domitian was due to a deliberate policy and was not confined to any one city or area. From such records as we have of this disturbance, it seems likely that it came largely from Domitian's demand for divine honors as a symbol of allegiance to his rule. Emperor-worship was not new to the Empire. Augustus had been declared divine by the Roman Senate after his death, and his name officially included in the list of deities appropriate for Romans to worship. The step from worshipping an emperor after his death to giving him divine honors during his lifetime had not been a difficult one for most to take, and the weaker emperors had tended to make use of such rites as a means of strengthening their claims upon their people. The Empire asked for the performance of these rites as a symbol of political loyalty, and from its point of view, the religious significance of the act was practically nil. Nor was the performance of these rites ever thought of by the government as excluding other worship or as conflicting with it. Hence, for most subjects of the Empire, no religious problem was presented by a mere formality, the purpose of which, in their

¹ Tacitus: *Annals* 15:44.

interpretation, was a recognition of their allegiance to a political power.

For the Christians, however, the situation was quite different. With their strong monotheistic pre-suppositions, their abhorrence for the least shadow of apostasy, they could not tolerate any rite, however formal in character, that hinted at the existence of other divine powers than the one true God. The paradox of the situation lay just here: that the Empire did not care for the religious significance of the act—any subject could have as many gods as he pleased, so long as he symbolized his loyalty to the Empire by the rite; and the Christians did not care for the political significance of the act—any government was satisfactory so long as it allowed them freedom to live and worship as they wished. If either side could have met the other on its own grounds, there would have been no trouble. But because each interpreted it in his own way, conflict did come, and with it, serious consequences for the Christian group.

Three books in the New Testament reflect this situation in the reign of Domitian when the Empire and the church came into conflict: Hebrews, First Peter, and Revelation. All three unite the interests of Rome with those of the church in Asia Minor or farther east. First Peter was written from Rome by a leader in the Roman church to a group of churches in the provinces of Asia Minor. Revelation was written by an elder to seven churches in the region of Ephesus, to give them counsel about how to deal with Rome's treatment of them. The situation that lies behind the book of Hebrews is not quite so clear, but many believe that it was written to the church in Rome by a leader, temporarily absent from that city, residing

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perhaps in Asia Minor or farther east. Probably all three of these works fall within the decade 85-95 A.D. Hebrews must have been written early in Domitian's reign, for it was quoted by Clement of Rome, writing in 95 A.D. First Peter and Revelation probably came toward the close of Domitian's reign, since the persecution seems already at the time of their writing to have advanced to its height.

As literature springing from a period of oppression, these books have in common an underlying conviction that suffering is the portion of Christians, but they differ greatly in their counsels as to how to meet it. Hebrews and First Peter are at one in the belief that suffering can be transcended without opposition to the government, but each has its own peculiar view as to the method of transcending it. First Peter counsels facing it with fortitude, and finds in it a definite meaning for Christian experience, while Hebrews suggests the building of an inner world of the spirit where one can live apart, untouched by these external problems which do not belong to the world of ultimate reality at all. Revelation, on the other hand, is frankly hostile to Rome, and finds its solution in an apocalyptic interpretation of the present conflict, appealing to the intervention of supernatural forces and promising rewards to the faithful in another world.

In this chapter we shall deal with the book of Hebrews, the earliest of these three works. Here we enter into a new and different literary world from that in which we have been living in our contemplation of the gospels, Paul's letters, Acts, and James. These latter were works of great simplicity and spontaneity, popular in character, and unconscious of literary pretension. Here, on the other

hand, is a work in the grand manner of literature, planful and orderly in the development of its thought, stately and dignified in its language, philosophical in its outlook, conscious of the effects which it wishes to produce. As Professor Moffatt says, it stands "like the Melchizedek whom it describes, and allegorises . . . a lonely and impressive phenomenon in the literature of the first century."²

There are many unanswered questions about Hebrews. We do not know, for instance, who wrote it, or where the author was when he wrote. We do not know with certainty the group to which it was addressed. We are not sure whether it was originally intended as a letter, or as a sermon. But partial answers at least to these questions are suggested by the contents of the book. Negatively as to the first question, the contents of Hebrews make it abundantly clear that Paul was not its author. The style and thought are completely different from Paul's and the situation implied is clearly later than Paul's time. Even if these points were not decisive, we could never think of Paul as appealing as this writer does to the testimony of those "that heard" (2:3). Paul was most insistent that his gospel was not mediated to him by others. He assures us that he did not "confer with flesh and blood," but got his gospel through revelation (Gal. 1:12-17). It is hard to think of his finding authority for his message by reason of having been in touch with "them that heard." But to a Christian of the second generation, such an appeal would be perfectly natural. The ascription of the book to Paul by the early collectors of the Christian literature doubtless came from their eagerness to connect the writings with the great personalities of the apostolic period, thereby

² Moffatt: *An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, p. 443.

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to increase the weight of their authority. Although many attempts have been made to assign this work to other persons with whom Acts has made us acquainted,—Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Priscilla, and others, there is no sufficient warrant for any such allocation. We must be content to think of it as the work of some leader unknown to us by name.

Because of the book's appeal to Hebrew thought and its frequent quotations from Hebrew scripture, it was formerly thought that it must have been written to a community of Jewish Christians. To this belief on the part of early scholars, we owe the title "To the Hebrews" under which the book appears in the New Testament. Its closing phrase, "They of Italy salute you," was then taken to indicate that the writer was in Rome, sending the greetings of the Roman church to the Jewish group addressed. The argument of the book was then interpreted as directed toward keeping these Jewish Christians from falling back into Judaism by proving the superiority of Christianity to the Jewish faith.

Recent interpretation,³ however, has taken another view, which seems truer to the actual contents of the book. Because the writer suggests that the readers of his work have a long history, a history also of leadership, and because he calls to their minds a former persecution (5:12, 10:32), it has been suggested that we think of Hebrews as written to the church at Rome,—not perhaps to the whole community, but to a small group of leaders, of whom the writer says, "Ye ought to be teachers" (5:12). "They of Italy," then, who send their greetings at the close of the letter, would be some of the Roman Christians who, absent from

³ Cf. E. F. Scott: *The Epistle to the Hebrews*.

home like the writer, wish to send messages back with his to the home church.

Because the appeals to Jewish thought are so warmly appreciative and sympathetic, it is suggested that the comparison of the two faiths, Judaism and Christianity, is intended, not to keep the group from falling back into Judaism, but to make them appreciate the Jewish backgrounds of Christianity, as leading up to the superior and ultimate revelation of God through Jesus Christ. The absence of any reference to the Jewish-Christian controversy, so vital an issue in Paul's letters, shows clearly that this particular argument about Judaism is more for the purposes of thought than of practice. In the latter part of the century, when we believe that this work was written, the Jewish-Gentile question had fallen into the background, because Christianity had become so largely a religion of the western world. This kind of discussion, in which the author is not meeting the issues of a practical adjustment of Christianity to Judaism, but in a more academic fashion is showing the subordinate relation of one to the other, would be quite appropriate as addressed to the Roman church near the close of the first century.

The purpose of the author is to quicken the group to whom he writes, but not because he fears their relapse into Judaism. What he fears for them is that they may fail to enter with ardor into their profession of Christianity, and that they may not fulfill completely their responsibilities for leadership in the group of which they are a part. All his energy and eloquence are poured into the effort to awaken them to a full and enthusiastic participation in the privileges of Christian leadership. To this end, he has chosen to develop an argument that demon-

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strates the superiority of Christianity even to the finest faith and religious practice that he knows beside it.

As to the form of the book, it seems to be partly letter and partly sermon. The author himself calls it "a word of exhortation" (13:22) and there are several phrases that suggest its being spoken rather than read:—"we speak" (2:5, 6:9), "we are saying" (8:1), and "what shall I more say? for time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David, Samuel and the prophets" (11:32). Its eloquence is like that of a spoken discourse. It opens as a sermon would open. But its close is that of a letter, with personal messages, greetings, and benediction. In those final sentences, the author speaks of himself as writing (13:22). These facts are perhaps best satisfied by the suggestion that it was prepared as a sermon by a leader distant from the group which he was addressing, and that in sending his discourse to be read aloud by some one else, he appended these messages at the end, which gave it thus much the form of a letter.

By way of summary then of these matters that have to do with the origin of this work, we may suggest that it was written by an unknown Roman leader temporarily absent from his own group, whom he knew well and for whom he entertained high hopes. As he reflected upon the apathy of even those who were capable of high leadership, their failure to enter into their Christian profession with zestfulness, he wrote a sermon for this selected group, hoping perhaps to deliver it himself. When he found that impossible, he sent it on to be read to them by some one else, and appended at that time, the personal messages which gave it the character of a letter. Among these messages, was one from Roman Christians staying in

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the community in which he was at the time. Their greetings went back with his to the home church. With such an understanding of the background and setting for the work, let us now look to the burden of its argument.

The major purpose of the writer of Hebrews is to call his friends into a joyful participation in their Christian heritage. The supreme revelation of God has been given in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Christian's great High Priest who affords now and forever that direct and effective access to God which is the purpose of all worship, but which no previous intermediary or system has ever made possible. The whole historic religious system of Judaism, with its scripture, its sacrifices, its prophets, its succession of heroes, its doctrines, its priesthood, and its promises gave only a partial revelation. Even angels could not do what Jesus has done. Before his coming, the best of religion was merely a shadow or reflection of ultimate things. Now in Jesus, God has given the very reality itself. The heart of religion for the Christian lies in the appropriation of this great gift.

And how does one appropriate it? By faith. Faith is that principle by which all the great leaders of the past have entered into and maintained their leadership. One by one he names them over, showing how their achievements came through faith:

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death. . . .

By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house. . . .

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out

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unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out not knowing whither he went.

By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob. (11:5-9)

But great as the contribution was that these leaders made, religion's full gift was incomplete until the final revelation was made in Jesus.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. . . .

And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (11:13, 39-40)

It is because the revelation is now full and complete in Jesus, that the writer can urge his readers to go forward in faith into a mature and complete experience of religion.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, . . . let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith. (10:19-20)

This is to him the urgency of the present situation. Others have had the opportunity of accepting this heavenly gift, have "tasted the good word of God and have fallen away." Now it behooves all good Christians, he says, to

lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (12:1-2)

The pivot of the author's thought is his interpretation of Jesus. It differs radically from the thought of him in the letters of Paul and in the gospels. There is no stress here upon Jesus' ministry nor upon his teaching. Here the stress is rather upon his office as mediator between God and man, his great High-priesthood, which in itself has made Christianity the ultimate and final religion. "Through his own blood" he "entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (9:12). In this interpretation the emphasis on Jesus is philosophical rather than practical, and we can see clearly that the writer has been influenced by a school of philosophy that had its home in Alexandria. In order to enter fully into the thought of Hebrews, one must have some acquaintance with this Alexandrian thought upon which he draws.

The dominant figure of this Alexandrian school of thought was Philo, a Hellenistic Jew whose lifetime covered the first half of the first century A.D. In general, his scheme of thought was a blending of Plato's philosophy with Jewish religious thought, an attempt to find the Platonic doctrines implicit in Hebrew scripture. From Plato he accepted the conception of an ideal world of reality, of which the material world is but a shadow or copy. Prominent in his system was the doctrine of the Logos, or Word of God, a concept which already had had

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a considerable history before he adopted it, but which was employed by him as a principle of mediation between God and man. The soul's quest for God, Philo thought, was realized when this Logos possessed man's soul, and made it live with God. The Logos was also to him an eternal principle of creation, existent before the world was, co-working with God in the making of the world, and continuing as a spiritual reality infusing all the universe with reason and order. By means of allegorizing the Hebrew scriptures, Philo claimed to find the Platonic philosophy implicit in the Law and the Prophets.

It has been necessary to make this little excursion into the field of Alexandrian thought, because it so clearly forms the background of the interpretation of Jesus in Hebrews. We shall see also when we come to the Gospel of John how that writing too made use of the Logos concept, which it derived from Philo, to introduce Jesus to its readers: "In the beginning was the Word." This concept is dominant in the stately preface to Hebrews:

God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. (Heb. 1:1-4)

Again the Logos ideas seem to lie behind the passage in which the writer speaks of the mission of Christ:

For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. (2:8-10)

These passages and others in the book make of Jesus a heavenly being, apart from men, one who has "passed through the heavens" (4:14), "who abideth forever" in "a priesthood unchangeable" (7:24). They remove him far from the portrayals of him in the gospels as the carpenter of Nazareth who "went about doing good." But these are representative of only one side of the author's thought about Jesus. There is another view of Jesus which is equally important to him, and although it contrasts with this one, he holds the two together, as two foci of his ellipse of thought.

The other and contrasting emphasis is that upon Jesus' full participation in humanity and in its trials and sufferings. He is shown as coming into his adequacy as saviour through the very experience of his earthly life "made perfect through sufferings" (2:10).

Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he

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himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. (2:17-18)

We are reminded in this emphasis on the humanity of Jesus of the interpretation of him in Luke's gospel.

But this is the first time that we have seen a Christian writer making worship so central in his interpretation of Christianity. Paul was a mystic, but his mysticism was strongly infused with ethical values. The synoptic gospels had presented Jesus both as Messiah and as a teacher in whose message religious and ethical values are deeply interfused. Now in Hebrews we have an interpretation of Jesus as our great High Priest, through whom we have access to God. It is explained that he does not need to offer sacrifice daily as other priests do for

this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. (7:27)

Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. (7:25)

Thus to this writer the highest experience of Christianity is a perfected worship achieved through Jesus our great High Priest.

To understand the significance of these passages that deal with Jesus' high priesthood, with his having entered within the veil, one must recall the pattern of the Jewish sacrificial act. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest, representing all the people in his own person, sacrificed for the sins of all, and then entered into the holy of holies in the Temple, passing beyond the veil which divided this holy place from the place of meeting. By this act he was believed to come into the actual presence of God. The

phrase in Hebrews, "beyond the veil," which occurs so frequently, recalls this practice and symbolizes Christ's mediation between man and God. It makes his service primarily a perfecting of the relationship between them achieved in worship.

Philosophical values have their place, as we have seen, in this work, but they serve in the author's thought to build a background for this central experience of religion, which to him is a perfected worship. The ethical expression of religion also is not forgotten. There are admonitions to follow after peace, to love the brethren, and to look out for the well-being of strangers. The Christian is urged to maintain purity of life, to refrain from bitterness, to keep himself clear of the love of money, to be critical and wary about accepting strange teachings (Chs. 12 and 13). But these admonitions seem to be appended to the main message and to be hardly integral to it. What is central to the Christian in this writer's thought is that he should realize that he is participating in the final and ultimate experience of religion as he enters, through the mediation of Jesus, the High Priest, into the very presence of God.

But if philosophy and ethics are less central in the author's thought of religion than the experience of worship, we should note that even his central conception is made somewhat subservient in his book to the practical purpose of encouraging and strengthening the Christian group in its hour of discouragement. What is all the argument for? Not merely for the establishing of truth in an academic fashion. Why does the writer care to establish the fact that Christianity is superior to every other form of religion,—that it is indeed the final and ultimate form of

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religion at its highest? It is to help his readers to see that it must be prized and cherished, entered into zestfully, and if need be, suffered for and died for. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood" (12:4), he urges them. They should call to remembrance earlier days of persecution, when they endured "a great conflict of sufferings" (10:32). Their comfort and strength is in the inner world of the spirit.

Ye have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. (10:34)

It is for chastening that ye endure. (12:7)

And because of this he can urge them to "lay aside every weight" and run with patience the race that is set before them.

This book of Hebrews belongs to a special situation in the life of the Christian church,—that period after the first eager enthusiasm kindled by the personality of Jesus and the sense of wonder at the progress of the new movement has passed. It belongs to the time when the powerfully sustaining forces of a great church organization, with its creeds, its scriptures, its hierarchy of officials had not yet come into being. The hope of Jesus' speedy return to earth had not yet been abandoned (10:25, 36-37). It was a time when opposition from without, and waning fervor within menaced the life of the church. In meeting this difficult situation, the author of Hebrews made use of an argument, some aspects of which it is hard for modern readers to find meaningful in their own religious lives. The use of the Alexandrian philosophy removes it from our world of thought. The appeal to the Jewish sacrificial system lessens its pertinence to our circle of religious interests.

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Even its thought of God is less attractive to us than that of other New Testament writings for it treats Him as remote, transcendent, and an object of fear:

Our God is a consuming fire. (12:29)

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (10:31)

Whose voice then shook the earth. (12:26)

Nor is the rôle of Jesus, as Hebrews pictures it, the one in which we like best to think of him,—the rôle of high priest, whose work is to perform the sacrificial act of mediation between God and man.

But in spite of these facts, the book takes hold on us. Some of the best known and best loved lines in the New Testament are found here. Its poise in time of danger, its urgency to quicken fervor and to stimulate leadership, move us even though the particular situation to which the author wrote is past, and even though some of his ideas are not now appealing to us. No one can read the majestic lines of the preface to Hebrews, and hear their stately rhythms without responding to their beauty. The great chapter on faith, with its opening lines of definition, its impressive survey of the sweep of Hebrew history, its compact phrases of epitomized experience, its eloquent summary about those who "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire" rises to persuasive climax in the appeal for steadfastness:

Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and

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the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. (12:1)

The author's power over poetic phrase is repeatedly evidenced, as he speaks of Christian experience as an "anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast" (6:19); of its goal as "the city which hath the foundations whose builder and maker is God" (11:10); of Jesus as "the author and perfecter of our faith" (12:2); "the same, yesterday, today and forever" (13:8). And the benediction, which is one of the most beautiful in all Christian writing, testifies to the poetic power of the writer.

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead, the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Edmund Gosse, the English literary critic, pays a tribute to the literary beauty of Hebrews in his spiritual autobiography *Father and Son*. As he tells of his religious training in childhood, he says:

This summer, as my eighth year advanced, we read the "Epistle to the Hebrews" with very great deliberation, stopping every moment that my Father might expound it, verse by verse. The extraordinary beauty of the language,—for instance the matchless cadences and images of the first chapter,—made a certain impression upon my imagination, and were (I think) my earliest initiation into the magic of literature. I was incapable of defining what I felt, but I certainly had a grip in the throat, which was in

its essence a purely æsthetic emotion, when my Father read, in his pure, large, ringing voice, such passages as "The heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest."⁴

Consideration of this work, so individual in character, so different from its companion books in the New Testament collection, stirs us to reflection upon the richness and variety of our Christian literary heritage. Here was a writer who approached Christian experience in a fashion quite different from either the gospel writers or Paul. And the qualities of his writing also set him apart from the other authors of the New Testament. A student, rather than a man of action, he wrote in more academic fashion, employing more studied and polished modes of expression than the others. More reflective in temperament, he wrote in a more carefully considered fashion. He is not intuitive like Paul, but contemplative; his discourse is one in which ordered thought moves to its logical conclusions.

Nevertheless it is not his logic that moves us today. It is rather the depth of his conviction and the persuasiveness of his eloquence that make his work to us full of "the magic of literature." Under the stately phrases we feel that a profound religious experience is seeking expression. The majesty of his writing comes from the wealth of his own feeling, and it is this which gives it weight and persuasiveness to us who are so far removed in time from its first-century readers.

To the little group of leaders in the church to which it was first sent, it had a distinctive and individual message to impart. It was a call to them to build a world of

⁴ (Scribners, 1919), p. 94.

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thought and experience in the eternal realms of spiritual value. Christians who by faith lived in this world of the eternal verities would find themselves empowered to withstand persecution, or any kind of suffering that this world could bring upon them. They had as an eternal possession access to the very throne of God through Jesus, their great High Priest. As they laid hold on this possession, they would take their place in the great succession of patriarchs, saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs, and they would thus become partakers of a heavenly calling. With such persuasiveness, with such stately beauty of phrase, does this sermon call them into this high estate, that Christians always and everywhere have responded to its urgency. In other times, and in completely other situations, Christians feel themselves called by this eloquent preacher to join that great company of souls who in all the ages have been seeking for the "city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

CHAPTER X

FACING FIERY TRIALS

FIRST PETER

A LITTLE later than the writing of Hebrews, probably about the end of Domitian's reign, when the persecution of the Christians in Asia Minor that had characterized his rule had reached its height, a letter went out from Rome to the Christian churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Like Hebrews, it spoke to Christians who were being persecuted, and like Hebrews, it believed that such affliction could be handled victoriously, without hostility to the government. It sought its solution, however, in a different way from that which Hebrews had counselled. Those to whom First Peter was written were suffering more acutely than those who were addressed in Hebrews. Their trial was "fiery" (I Peter 4:12); and by this time, the mere bearing of the name of Christian was sufficient to incur punishment (4:14). But even under these trying circumstances, the letter of First Peter was written to give one of the most hopeful and heartening messages in all the New Testament.

Hebrews had counselled the meeting of persecution by building an inner world of thought, apart from the troubled experiences that Christians were meeting in their relation to the Empire. First Peter, on the other hand, affirmed that in the very midst of trouble, while participat-

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ing in every relationship that this world affords, Christians could still preserve a hopeful and victorious spirit. They could even welcome suffering, because it gave them a sense of participation in Christ's sufferings, and tested their faith, refining it as gold is refined by fire.

This is the heart of the letter,—a message of practical encouragement and hopeful faith. The Christian faith, it affirms, gives meaning to life, under whatever conditions it has to be lived. It can dominate human relations, and ennoble them. The common, everyday human problems can be interpreted in the light of the Christian gospel and can be solved in the Christian spirit. Servants should obey their masters,—not merely the admirable ones, but those who are unreasonable as well. Husbands and wives should think of their relationship as making them "joint-heirs of the grace of life" (3:7). Even in the case of a marriage in which one partner is pagan there can be such exercise of a "meek and quiet spirit" on the part of the Christian member, such giving of honor to the other, that the partner "without the word" may perhaps "be gained" (3:1-7).

In the Christian community, all should live in love as brethren, not "rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling" (3:9). Those who have responsibility for leadership in the group as elders should make their leadership express itself rather by example than by the exercise of authority. And those who are not leaders should be good followers, submitting to direction humbly, and with eagerness to be of service.

The relationship between Christians and non-Christians interests the writer greatly. He hopes that the sober and righteous behavior of the Christian group may so impress the pagans among whom they live that it may cause reflec-

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tion upon what produces such good works (2:12). They will then, "think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess" (4:4). Criticism and opposition can be disarmed by the Christians' blameless conduct. If any pagan is interested to question them, Christians should be "ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you." And always they should "answer gently and with a sense of reverence."¹

This advice regarding the Christians' relations with their pagan neighbors is revealing of the fact that the church is now coming forward into a position of greater importance in the Gentile society than it has formerly had. Such counsels as these testify to the growth of the Christian community not only in numbers, but also in importance as a social factor in the cities and towns of which they were a part.

The relationship, however, which is of most importance to the author and to the group addressed in this letter is that which subsists between governor and governed. The fact that the state is hostile to the Christian group does not mean that the Christians should respond with hostility. Like Paul counselling the Roman Church to be "in subjection to the higher powers," and "to render tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom" (Rom. 13), so the author of this letter counsels the Christians in Asia Minor to accept graciously the provisions of the government under which they live.

Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to

¹ 3:15, Moffatt's translation.

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them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. (2:13-17)

But he cannot give this advice without reckoning with the fact of persecution. It is not easy to honor the king when the ruling power is putting forth its strength against the Christian group. Thus the author is led into an interpretation of the meaning of persecution. Even this distressing condition of affairs can be turned to account by the Christian. He can think of persecution as having a genuine significance for his Christian experience. It can be to him a testing of faith.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth, though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1:6-7)

Christ suffered also, and left an example of complete submission, offering neither resistance nor rebellion to those who caused his suffering (2:22). Christians can therefore think of their suffering as making them participate in the experience of Christ, and they can then accept it joyfully.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at

the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. (4:12-13)

It would be quite another matter if they were to be punished by the state for some kind of wrongdoing. That, he says, is not under discussion now. But if one is punished by the state for the mere fact of being a Christian, then one is to count such suffering an honor.

For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters: but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name. (4:15-16)

This interpretation of the experience of persecution in so heroic a fashion must have been of great service to the church. As we think of the average member of the Christian groups, living in some city or town in some one of the provinces mentioned in the heading to this letter, and try to imagine his feelings at finding himself out of favor with his neighbors, we cannot but know that life must have seemed perplexing and difficult to him. He must have been puzzled as to what his course should be. If he did not participate in the annual or semi-annual festivals in honor of the deified emperor, or if in other ways he held himself aloof from the society of his fellow-townsmen, he was bound to arouse criticism. If, on the other hand, he participated in their enterprises, he felt himself false to his principles. Much as the absolute pacifist today can hardly avoid opposition because of his opinions, so the Christian in the first century under Domitian could hardly avoid tension between himself and his neighbors. If feeling happened to be strong in the particular community in which he lived, it was likely that some one would

appeal to the local or provincial officers, and trouble would ensue.

At such a time, what meaning this letter would have, with its high appeal to participate in "a living hope"! (1:3) The writer summons Christians to take pride in their status as an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession (2:9). He fortifies them with his prediction that the end is near, and that their suffering will be only for a little while (4:7, 5:10). He gives them the strengthening assurance of the solidarity of the Christian community all over the world, in this experience:

Knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world. (5:9)

This latter appeal is revealing of the growing sense of unity in the church throughout the Empire. We cannot think of the earliest communities, those founded by Paul and his associates, as feeling very deeply their oneness with all the faithful throughout the world. When any such sense of unity came in the early days, it came through special leadership in some common enterprise. Paul was working for some such feeling of unity when he urged the Gentile churches to contribute to the needs of the poor in the Jerusalem church. But a sense of the church's solidarity throughout the world was of later growth, and here in the letter of First Peter, we can see how opposition had had its part in creating it. This was one of the spiritual meanings that the author of First Peter saw in suffering,—that it united the various bodies of Christians throughout the Empire, and made them feel deeply the organic relationship that they sustained to one another.

This letter was meeting a practical situation and is genuinely practical in spirit. Its main office was to bring hope and courage to Christians who were being persecuted. It interpreted for them the relationship of the Christian gospel to their social experience. It did not discuss theology nor aim to present the basis in thought for the practical counsels. Nevertheless, a theology was implicit in its instructions, and in incidental phrases we see how the author carried Christian thought along with his practical advice.

In his thought God is creator and mighty in power, bringing the righteous and sinners to judgment, but He is also One who is in tender relationship with His children:

Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator. (4:18)

God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you. (5:5-7)

The author's thought of Christ is concentrated mainly upon the fact of his suffering. He cites him as the great example of suffering nobly borne, and calls the Christians to think of their trouble as a means of participating in the experience of Christ. But he also speaks of Christ as "the chief Shepherd" at whose coming the faithful will be rewarded (5:4); and he brings forward the strange doctrine of Jesus as descending to the realms of the dead, and preaching the gospel there.

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Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient. (3:18-19)

For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (4:6)

The spirits in prison seem to be those of all the ages previous to Christ, who because of disobedience to God, have been imprisoned in the realms below the earth. This is the first expression in Christian literature of this belief, but it is not the last. The Apostles' Creed gave it permanent expression in its affirmation: "He descended into Hell." One can understand how problems would be presented to the mind about those who had preceded Jesus in time, when salvation was thought of as coming exclusively through him. And such problems led to this conception of his going to the underworld and offering the gospel to those who were in prison there.

This strange belief about Jesus is however balanced by a very beautiful passage about his meaning to Christian experience in the opening paragraph of the letter. In speaking of the trials through which his readers are passing, the author says:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though

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now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. (1:6-9)

We can readily imagine how with the passage of the years, and the gradual loss of all those who had known Jesus face to face, difficulty would arise about keeping alive that warm, vital, personal faith in Jesus that had characterized the first generation of Christians. The author provides a creative and beautiful way of making the transition from the personal acquaintance with Jesus that was the bond of union among his first followers, to the faith which must be cherished in the second and later generations of Christians through the exercise of the spiritual imagination. Salvation through Jesus was not dependent upon seeing him face to face. All the later ages of the church have had to find their way to faith without that acquaintance with him,—

though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice. (1:8)

All the later ages are in debt to the author of this letter for a pioneer expression of the reality of love for Christ and faith in him without seeing him face to face.

First Peter, although written for a specific situation in Asia Minor in the first century, is a letter that has permanent significance for Christian living. Its interpretation of Christianity as affecting every human relationship, and as giving a basis for hope and courage in every situation has made it universally helpful. It is one of the New Testament books most readily adapted to give help to the average Christian in his everyday experience. But it is also a fine means of insight into the nature of early Christian

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leadership. There was in this author the ability to project himself into the lives of those to whom he wrote, and he wrote with real understanding of and sympathy with their problems. His hopeful, courageous spirit must have been to them a source of inspiration and strength. As we read his book today, we feel that this was leadership of a high order. He must have been one of the finest of the early Christian leaders.

That we cannot identify him today should not detract from our admiration of him. The letter was written too late to have been by Peter. It could hardly have been originally associated with his name, for his death would have been known to every Christian community in the last decade of the first century; and the body of the letter itself makes no claim to being by him. (The phrase about being a witness to Christ's sufferings [5:1] does not constitute such a claim, for "witnessing" was as often applied to giving testimony to Christ as to seeing him.) The attributing of the letter to Peter must have come considerably later than its writing and was due to the usual desire of those who collected and treasured the Christian writings to attach them to the great names in the Christian succession of leaders. How the man who wrote this letter was named we do not know, or what his other activities as a Christian leader were, beside writing this letter. But even so, his personality has been richly revealed to us in this one expression of his leadership. From it we know that he was one who had real insight into the meaning of Christian experience, and one who knew how to interpret the Christian gospel so that it could be practically helpful for life.

CHAPTER XI

HOSTILITY TO ROME

REVELATION

OPPOSITION from the Roman government produced varied responses from the Christian group. We have seen how two leaders, the authors of Hebrews and First Peter, were stimulated by persecution to counsel an adjustment of the church to it, one through the medium of thought and the kindling of faith, and the other through a practical handling of life, interpreting suffering itself as a means of grace. A third writer, the author of the book of Revelation, takes a quite different position, assuming an attitude of frank hostility to Rome, and thinking of the present tension between the church and the government as the death struggle of the forces of evil, a struggle long heralded in Jewish apocalyptic thought as the prelude to the end of the world, and the ultimate triumph of right.

Revelation is the hardest book among the New Testament writings for modern readers to understand. Its picture of a material heaven, its stress on conflict and punishment, its active antagonisms, its strange beasts and bizarre imagery, its cryptic symbols have made it an enigma to many. But there are keys to its understanding of which we may avail ourselves. One of them is the realization of the situation in which it was written. Apocalyptic has always been a literature of escape from a world too diffi-

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cult to be borne. Revelation exhibits that temper of mind. The government's opposition to Christianity had caused much suffering and distress. The letter to the church at Pergamum shows that there had already been one martyrdom in that city, when it refers to "Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you" (Revelation 2:13). There are two references in the book which indicate that emperor-worship was the friction-point between the church and Rome (13:12 and 13:15). Such suffering as the church had experienced had caused this writer to despair of any solution for the problem of Christians in this present world. Like other apocalyptic seers from whom he drew his inspiration, and derived many of his ideas and symbols, he threw all his hope forward into a life beyond this present world. It was a dangerous thing to be a Christian at the time he wrote. But Christianity represented the way of right. And right would surely triumph in the end. His book was a tract for bad times, and is to be understood in the light of the great difficulties that produced it.

A second key to its understanding lies in the realization that it is representative of a definite literary type, common to its own time, and with a considerable history preceding it. The method of its writing is strange to us today, because not many of its modern readers have familiarized themselves with the body of writings that form the school to which it belongs. But to its own day its literary features were thoroughly familiar, and its readers were quite at home in them. The most common features of apocalyptic writing are: a vision authorizing the writer to give a divinely inspired message, a series of symbolic events that portend the final overthrow of evil and the triumph of

good, a revelation of the ultimate peace and happiness of the new age, certain sanctions or authorizations of these promises, certain oft-employed, well-known symbols, and a cryptic medium of language which concealed meaning from those without the circle to which the author belonged, but revealed it to those within. All these were features of the current apocalyptic literature perfectly familiar to the first readers of the book. If they become so to us, they are helpful to us in our understanding of Revelation.

A third help in interpreting Revelation is in entering into the circle of ideas which dominate it. For apocalyptic writing was more than a mere literary form. It was also an accepted structure of thought. Revelation is built upon this commonly accepted scheme of apocalyptic ideas. It assumes as basic to religion the belief in the moral government of the world. It believes that since the present order defeats the supremacy of good, and allows evil the upper hand, one must seek the solution of this problem in the world of supernatural forces. The present order allows righteous people to suffer; hence one must assume that good will receive its reward, and wickedness its doom in another world beyond death. Apocalyptic thinking often portrayed this triumph of right as coming to pass through the offices of a divinely appointed leader, a Messiah, who would assume his rôle as judge at a great assize, cosmic in scale, which would mark the end of the present order.

These apocalyptic ideas had a considerable vogue in the century preceding the Christian era, and in the centuries immediately following. They were not confined to Jewish thinkers. Babylonian, and Persian thought also made use of them. But for the author of Revelation and for Chris-

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tians in general, Jewish apocalyptic writings were influential and formative, and this particular Christian writing is the direct inheritor of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition.

Christian adaptations of these apocalyptic ideas naturally took place,—notably two. First, in Christian apocalyptic thinking, Jesus came to be identified with the Messiah who would usher in the new age. Through him, it was believed, God would bring to pass His moral purpose for the world. Conceptions of the nature of messiahship varied in the views of the various apocalyptical writers, but upon this function there was quite general agreement,—that the Messiah would initiate the new order of justice and right. Since the earthly life of Jesus did not bring these ideals to fulfillment, and since indeed his crucifixion seemed incompatible with them, those who thought of his rôle in apocalyptic patterns were forced to project their imaginations into some other realm and some other time, where their beliefs about him could realize their fulfillment.

Thus came the second major adaptation of Jewish apocalyptic concepts that Christian thinking made, namely,—to identify the promised end of the world and the initiation of the other-worldly régime of blessedness and peace with the second coming of Jesus. Then he would assume the prerogatives of messiahship, of which he had not availed himself during his lifetime. Then he would take to himself power, and rule as Judge and King. Then the kingdom of this world would become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ.

When Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church, he expected this return of Jesus before the end of the lifetime of those to whom he wrote.

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For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (I Thess. 4:16-18)

We have seen how both Hebrews and First Peter take it for granted that only a little time of waiting is to be endured before the final consummation of the divine plan. Revelation makes this expectation more immediate still. The book is charged with the feeling that the new age is on the very verge of breaking through. Again and again this note of immediacy is struck:

for the time is at hand. (1:3, 22:10)

I come quickly. (2:16, 3:11, 22:12)

I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (3:3)

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. (3:20)

There is no mistaking the conviction that lies behind the book: things have come to such a pass that they can go on no longer. The new age of justice, which will be ushered in by the return of Jesus is already imminent. No long time of waiting need be endured, for "the time is at hand."

The plan of the book is not complicated. It opens with the story of a vision which authorized the seer to give his message. This vision came to him while he was an exile

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on the island of Patmos. And appropriately, it came on the Lord's day. It prompted him to write a series of seven letters to seven churches in the region of Ephesus. They are not true letters in the sense that they should go out as separate messages to the several local congregations. They are intended, rather, to be read together in a series, and to be representative of the author's view for the church at large. Although each one carries some suggestions about the particular situation of the community to which it is addressed, they form together a common message for the church in Asia Minor. That message is one of both encouragement and warning. The encouragement is in the repeated affirmations of the imminence of Jesus' return with judgment. The warnings are against participation in the things of this world with which Christians are surrounded. To bear with fortitude what suffering is involved in their relations with the Empire, to preserve the high ardor of the early days of Christian experience, and above all to hold aloof from practices that suggest adaptation to the Hellenistic society of which they are a part,—this is what the author would urge upon his readers.

These letters form a prologue to the main message of the book, which is a record of a succession of visions: visions of God and of Christ, of the worship that is given to them continuously in heaven, of the terror that will come upon the earth,—strife and famine, invasion and death, cataclysms in nature, hail and fire, volcanic eruption, earthquake and flood, falling stars, pestilence, drought, and war. These cataclysms are but preludes to the vision of the final dramatic conflict between good and evil, God and Satan, the church and Rome. After this the author sees judgment fall on Rome in the person of

the scarlet woman, and sings the dirge over the city that carries out into such concrete detail the author's belief that destruction must wait upon the wickedness of that city. After this culmination of the work of justice comes the vision for which all the rest is but preparation,—the vision of the new Jerusalem, in which takes place the reign of peace and blessedness for those who have been faithful. In the painting of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the best of the artist's skill and fervor has been called into play. Proportion, for the city stands foursquare; color, for it is to be adorned with brilliant and colorful jewels; stability, for the walls have twelve foundations; light, for the glory of God is to shine in it,—all these have a place in his picture of the city. This is the city of his dreams. In the materials of jasper, and gold, and crystal, in the gates of pearl, and the streets of pure gold, in all the rich embroidery of detail in which he takes delight, he symbolizes the living hope he cherishes for a society in which the Christian group shall be supreme and where there shall be for them neither mourning nor crying nor pain any more.

When he indicates that along with the unbelieving, the murderers, the sorcerers, the liars, and the idolaters, the *fearful* are to be in the lake of burning fire and brimstone which is the second death (21:8), we know that he means those within the Christian group who have been timid in the face of persecution, who have not stood firm in their faith when the Empire threatened them. In such a collocation of the faint-hearted with the criminals we see revealed the tension of the times,—the critical relationship to the Empire in which the church stands.

Here then is a book conditioned by a special situation. It is indeed a tract for difficult days. It belongs to the

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stress and trouble of a time of persecution and speaks in unqualified antagonism to the government under which the Christians live. No conciliatory word is spoken in it. Rome is the embodiment of evil. There must be no compromise with her. She is the beast and the scarlet woman, and destruction must come upon her in the end. The ethic that the book advocates is an ethic of abstention. It counsels Christians to hold themselves aloof from the society in which they live. It is better to suffer and even to die than to concede in any slightest degree to the demands of the Empire. It looks forward to the destruction of the civilization in which the church now lives, and it sees the ultimate exaltation of the Christian society to a supernatural eminence where their days of trouble will be forgotten in the supernal bliss that is their destiny there.

Can we find such a scheme of thought compatible with the gospel of Jesus? How can we think of the book as having a rightful place in the chosen literature of Christianity? This problem of the place of Revelation in the Christian scripture is not a new one. The book found its way into the canon with difficulty. The history of its interpretation shows that the problems of its thought have often been solved by treating it as an allegory. Its hostility to the Empire has often been allegorized to mean hostility to sin, and its hatreds softened as Augustine softened them by interpreting them as applicable not to the Roman State, but to pagan stubbornness in resisting Christianity, wherever such resistance might be found. Sometimes, to be sure, the book has been interpreted literally as prophecy, and its predictions, seen to be as yet unfulfilled, have been thought of as pointing to a still future date. In time of war particularly, Christian combatants have applied its

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predictions to their own situation, saying that their enemies were the ones in the author's mind when he talked of the destruction of the beast. Thinking of it as having a far future in view when it was written, has enabled many to apply it to their own situation and their own time. But those who see in this writing a human document revealing the passionate faith of the early Christians in the midst of the persecution that they suffered under Domitian, are puzzled not so much by the question of its original meaning, as by the problem of how to think of it as a part of the permanent scripture of the Christian faith. How little it has to do with the way of life that Jesus taught! The Christ that it exalts is a Christ who comes riding upon a white horse, carrying a flashing two-edged sword, coming not in a lowly ministry of service, but to judge and to make war.

Many of its beliefs we cannot hold today,—its belief in the imminent close of history, and in the method of cataclysm and force, its assumption that the warfare between good and evil is spectacular and dramatic, culminating in the ultimate destruction of the evil, its personification of evil in Satan, of the forces of good in angels. We cannot think in terms of its localized heaven with its great white throne, of its abysses, its seas of glass, or its lake of burning fire.

But in spite of elements in it that have to be discarded, the book has laid hold on the imagination of Christians throughout all the ages and has made for itself a real place in the Christian tradition. We need only recall how artists have responded to its appeal, to realize its place in the imaginative life of Christians,—Dante, Milton, Michaelangelo, Tintoretto, Handel, Dürer, Blake, and many an-

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other poet and painter and musician have been kindled by its imaginative power. Part of its appeal has been in the strong pictorial power of the book. What visual images it calls up! The boldness of its figures startles us at times.

And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken by a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. (6:12-15)

When the seventh angel poured out his bowl of wrath, and Babylon (Rome) was to receive the cup of God's wrath, the author saw every island flee away, and the mountains were not found at all (16:20). One of the finest pieces of descriptive writing in the book is the picture of the complete desolation of Rome at the time of the final catastrophe. The concreteness of the picture is its strength.

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more; merchandise of gold and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble; and cinnamon and spice, and incense, and ointment, and

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frankincense, and wine and oil, and fine flour, and wheat and cattle, and sheep; and merchandise of horses and chariots and slaves; and souls of men. And the fruits which thy soul lusted after are gone from thee, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are perished from thee, and men shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning; saying, Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl! for in one hour so great riches is made desolate. And every ship-master, and every one that saileth any whither, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like the great city? And they cast dust on their heads and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her.

And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a mill shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the princes

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of the earth; for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived. (18:11-23)

Sound images have a considerable place in the effect that the book makes upon the reader. The writer creates a feeling of mystery and ominous presage as he prepares for the sounding of the fifth angel's trumpet:

And I saw, and I heard an eagle flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound. (8:13)

And as he narrates the vision which commissioned him to write, he speaks of the voice of Christ as the voice of many waters (1:15), and again in another vision of the Lamb, he says:

I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps. (14:2)

The four and twenty elders sing continuously around the throne of God, and the forty and four thousand who bear the name of God on their foreheads

sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand. (14:3)

The author's mastery of the art of contrast has much to do with the artistic quality of his writing. How skillfully he sets the peace and serenity of the heavenly city with its never-ceasing choirs over against the chaos and turmoil and distress of the earthly scene! He heightens our feeling

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of relief at the safety of the martyrs in heaven by picturing the four horsemen bringing invasion, civil strife, famine and death on earth. The song sung by heavenly voices:

The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,

seems all the more triumphant and moving because it follows so closely on the story of the great cataclysms in nature,—earthquake, and the destruction of the earthly city. And the reign of bliss in heaven, initiated by songs of praise and the chanting of hallelujahs, is the more exultant because it follows so directly upon that dramatic and concrete picture of the destruction of Rome.

But it is something deeper than its literary strength that has given this book its hold on the affection of Christians throughout all the ages. It has stood as a magnificent assertion of faith, kindling by its passionate affirmations a like faith in its readers. It has stood as a symbol of the comfort that religion offers to man in all his struggles and difficulties, and its great assertions of comfort have been appropriated by generations of suffering men:

These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. (7:14-17)

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And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. (21:3-4)

Revelation's ardent faith in the ultimate triumph of good has been a powerful stimulus to Christians to hold to a like faith in situations that seemed a denial of hope. "That is why," says J. Estlin Carpenter, "in spite of its pervading ferocities, it (Revelation) retains its hold on our imagination. The heavenly worship in which all creation joins, the multitude of the redeemed from every tongue and nation, the new heaven and the new earth, the New Jerusalem lighted by the glory of God—these belong not to one century only, but to all time. They are the witness of man's quenchless aspiration after the ideal, his trust that he has not been made in vain, his deep belief that there is a world where the age-long strife with evil is overcome with good."² And in similar fashion the book has kindled its readers to a new hold on the spiritual life by its affirmation of the boundless opportunity for which religion stands:

Behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut. (3:8)

How poetically that opportunity is suggested in the phrase:

I will give him the morning star. (2:28)

² J. Estlin Carpenter: *The Johannine Writings*. Houghton, Mifflin and Co., p. 186.

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It is in the realm of symbolic value that the book has taken its place in Christian experience. Full of symbols itself,—the rainbow round the throne of God, the city with its twelve gates that are never closed, the pure river of the water of life, the trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, the radiant light of the city which needs neither lamp nor sun, the Christ who is both Alpha and Omega,—it has come to have as a whole the value of a symbol in the devotional life of Christians. It stands for the unconquerable hope that is at the heart of religion. Who can read this boldly imaginative work, born out of distress and persecution, without being kindled to become one of those who hope in the Lord? The age-long struggle between good and evil goes on in the life of society and in the life of every individual soul. John of Patmos summons us as he summoned Christians in the first century,

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. (2:10)

And his hymn that is part of the unceasing worship in heaven sets for us the goal of our social task:

The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign forever and ever. (11:15)

The book as a whole, stands in our New Testament collection as high testimony to the triumphant quality in Christianity. Here is bodied forth in highly imaginative terms an inward possession which is the victory that overcomes the world,—even our faith.

CHAPTER XII

INTERPRETING CHRISTIANITY FOR THE GRÆCO-ROMAN WORLD

THE GOSPEL AND EPISTLES OF JOHN

THREE stories of the life of Jesus had been written in the period between 70 and 90 A.D. Then, as we have seen, Christian writers turned to other types of literary expression,—chronicle, sermon, epistle or apocalypse. It was not until the beginning of the second century that another writer took up the task of telling once more the story of Jesus. And this time a different motive lay behind the writing. Luke had set forth his aim at the beginning of his gospel,—to tell the story of Jesus' life "accurately" and "in order." But the author of the gospel of John thinks of his task in somewhat different terms. His purpose is expressed in the concluding lines of his gospel:

Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)

This statement suggests that the writer has been freely selective of material from that which was available to him, and that he held central in his work the conviction that the story he had to tell had deep significance for the inward religious life of those who read it.

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We shall want to examine the book itself to see in what manner this stated purpose is carried to fulfillment in the writing. But it will be helpful in our understanding of the book, first to try to envisage the *place and circumstances* of its writing and to discover as much as we can about the personality of the *writer*. Early Christian tradition said that this gospel was written in Ephesus, and much that the gospel itself contains would make that place seem appropriate for its composition. There at least can be no doubt that the book was intended for the Greek world. The use of the Logos-idea in its prologue, a concept that had had a long history in Greek philosophical thought, would have been appropriate and effective only in the Hellenistic world. The gospel's strange designation of the opponents of Jesus as "the Jews" (6:52, 7:1, 9:18 *et al.*) would not have been possible except in the Greek world, after Christianity had become so at home on Gentile soil as to be thought of as mainly a Gentile movement. Some aspects of the gospel's thought have seemed to many scholars especially appropriate to Asia Minor and the city of Ephesus.¹ On the whole the ancient tradition that the gospel arose in Ephesus is supported by such hints as the gospel affords of its locality.

But as to the identity of the *author*, we have less secu-

¹ For example the gospel emphasizes the reality of the human life of Jesus in assertions such as, "The Word became flesh." In Asia Minor there was a group of Gnostics for whom this emphasis would be especially appropriate. This sect, called Docetists, shared with all Gnostics the belief that matter was evil and denied that the Saviour could have a material body, and hence called his earthly existence merely a *seeming* rather than a reality.

Again, the emphasis in the gospel on the subordinate relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus seems appropriate to the situation in Ephesus. We know from the story in the eighteenth chapter of Acts that there were those in Ephesus who "knew only the baptism of John." The gospel seems eager to correct such an interpretation of Christianity when it says so explicitly of John, "He was not that light" (1:8).

rity. The early church, always eager to regard the sacred writings as the work of the apostles, saw in the references to the disciple whom Jesus loved (13:23) a pointing to John the son of Zebedee, and believed that this was a designation for the author himself. Very early there was added to the gospel a postscript, Chapter 21, which made explicit the identification of the author with the beloved disciple. In the original gospel, Chapters 1-20, however, there is no indication of who the author was, and from the nature of its story, it seems to many more likely that the one who wrote it was some later Christian. Quite probably he was of Jewish birth, but certainly he was at home in Greek modes of thought and experience, and hence was ideally fitted to carry on the task so nobly initiated by Paul,—that of interpreting the Christian gospel for the Græco-Roman world. Whether or not we can identify the author by name, we may still know him in an intimate way, for he has revealed in his story the inmost experiences of his being. We know him through this work to be a choice and dedicated spirit, a man of lofty religious genius, and high artistic gifts.

Let us at this point consider the three *Epistles of John*, because they afford us another means, beside the gospel, of acquaintance with this author,—a rather intimate acquaintance because of their informal nature. These three letters seem clearly to be written by the same author as the gospel. Of these the first is the most important as revealing the mind and personality of the writer. *Second* and *Third John* are very short letters, and are concerned with a special problem of church administration. Each of these two letters gives counsel, one to a church and one to a

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leader, Gaius, about their attitude toward travelling missionaries. In the second letter, the church addressed is warned against some false teachers who were planning to visit it. In the third, Gaius is urged to show deference and courtesy to certain missionaries whom the writer approves. These letters are highly valuable to us as revealing the difficulties that arose in the period of transition from an itinerant to a local leadership of the church. Through them we can see how a leader had to be alert to see whether those who assumed leadership were worthy of their vocation, and how rivalries arose between those in the local groups and those who went from place to place.

But it is especially to *First John* that we go for acquaintance with the thought and personality of the writer. Here as if speaking directly to those whom he knew well, as if calling up to them, in the spirit of affectionate counsel, the central truths of religious experience, he touches upon the great themes of God, of love, of eternal life, and of the Spirit. It is not a sequential treatment that we find here of these aspects of the religious life, but rather a random touch upon one and another of them, as the "elder" in meditative mood seems to be thinking aloud with his "little children." But if the letter is informal, and not developed in sequential fashion, this is not to say that it is careless. It is full of compact, meaty sayings, rich in experience and stored with nourishment for spiritual growth. As we read these epigrams of the religious life, we feel the strength of the personality from whom they came:

God is love. (4:8)

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God. (4:7)

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Perfect love casteth out fear. (4:18)

He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. (4:20)

God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (5:11)

As we compare this letter with the gospel, we see that the same purpose controls the writing of both. That purpose was the sharing of a deep religious experience which the author had found through Jesus.

As we return once more to the *gospel* after this brief glimpse of the letters, we are struck with the fact that this story of Jesus is more akin to the little meditative letter of First John than it is to the other three gospels. Like the letter, it was written for the purpose of sharing experience. It belongs first of all, as does the letter of First John, to the literature of devotion, and only secondarily to the category of chronicle or biography. Its true nature is a *devotional biography*.

Let us now examine the *structure* of the gospel. This writer's plan reveals itself clearly. He has made his story out of two main groups of material,—one which collects stories of Jesus' contacts with typical persons or groups (Chapters 1-12) and one which tells of his farewell discourses to the intimate group of his disciples, on whose understanding he can count (Chapters 13-20). The transition from one group of material to the other is marked by a summary paragraph at the end of Chapter 12, in which all the major assertions about Jesus that have been made in the first half of the book are given impressive utterance.

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And Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness. And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak. (12:44-50)

Throughout the gospel the writer seems more interested in the religious significance of events than in the events themselves. Events and teachings are so arranged as to show how the one is symbolic of the other. For example, the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand is placed in conjunction with his teaching, "I am the bread of life," as if the event became significant as a concrete symbol of the teaching. Other groupings of events with teaching in this same fashion are the healing of the blind man and the teaching, "I am the light of the world"; the meeting with the woman at the well and the saying, "I am the water of life"; the raising of Lazarus from the dead and the saying, "I am the resurrection and the life."

We note also that many stories and teachings that are familiar to us from the synoptic records are not here,—notably the parables that are so characteristic of Jesus' teaching method in the other gospels. Some events are

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placed in a different time setting, such as the cleansing of the Temple, which is here said to have taken place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry instead of at the end as in the synoptic story, and the last supper which is here on the night before the Passover, rather than on the Passover night as in the earlier gospels. But some stories are told here that the earlier gospels do not have at all: among them the story of Jesus' meetings with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman, the story of the changing of the water into wine, and the record of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

More striking however than either the omissions or the additions of new stories, or the different arrangement of the material, is the fact that Jesus' *message* as given here is so different from that in the synoptic story. Here his teaching is no longer centered about the kingdom and the good life of those who are its members, but rather about the significance of Jesus' own personality for the religious life of his followers:

He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live.
(11:25)

I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. (14:6)

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. (15:4)

The writer himself has found in Jesus the way, the truth, and the life, and this is what he is most concerned to share with his readers,—not the events of Jesus' life for their own sake. With Paul, this writer might say, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).

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This experience of the abundant life in Jesus is as much the subject of his story as are the events of Jesus' ministry.

It is significant, however, that with such a purpose in mind, he chose the medium of a biography of Jesus for his message. It was a true insight into values that made him realize how much it would mean to his interpretation of Jesus to have a grounding in history. Later works that leave out the background of history, and deal only with the abstract values of Jesus' life have been far less serviceable than the gospel of John to Christians throughout the ages. The gospel has made the simple story of Jesus' life on earth basic to the interpretation of his meaning as the Saviour of mankind. In this respect it stands midway between the chronicle and the apology. It is neither of these, but it has something of both in it, and for that reason has something of their combined strength. A solid foundation is put beneath the interpretation of Jesus as the Saviour by the fact that the writer can and does say:

That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. (I John 1:1-3)

With this glimpse of the nature and purpose of the Fourth Gospel, let us now look within it, seeking to discover what its *interpretation of Jesus* is, and what it says of the *religious life* one realizes through him. Jesus is introduced to the readers of this gospel by a short poetic prologue which identifies him with the Logos, the principle

of reason and order in the universe, a conception that had already had a long history in the philosophical thought of Greece:

In the beginning was the Logos,
and the Logos was with God,
and the Logos was divine.² (I:I)

In short, oracular phrases, this prologue suggests the pre-existence of the Logos, his creative power, and his office as bringer of Life and Light.

The same was in the beginning with God.
All things were made through him;
and without him was not anything made that hath been
made.

In him was life;
and the life was the light of men.
And the light shineth in the darkness;
and the darkness apprehended it not.

.

He was in the world,
and the world was made through him,
and the world knew him not.
He came unto his own,
and they that were his own received him not.

(I:3-5, IO-II)

It is interesting to note, that although the author makes use here of an abstract concept,—one that is metaphysical and has its source in Greek speculative thought,—still he saves it from elusiveness and too great abstractness by his identification of it with the earthly experience of Jesus:

² Author's translation.

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The Word became flesh,
and dwelt among us
(and we beheld his glory,
glory as of the only begotten
from the Father),
full of grace and truth.

It is as if he said to his Greek readers, "Your philosophers have discussed for centuries a principle of cosmic reason and order; now I am going to tell you of a life that has been lived which reveals in its fullness just what that principle means."

There is no story of Jesus' birth in this gospel, nor of his boyhood and preparation for his ministry. He appears on the scene, heralded by John the Baptist as "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (1:29).

He moves through the story as one who fulfills a greatly conceived mission. People hear his words, and see his wonderful works, and they *believe*. If they do not believe, it is because they have loved the darkness rather than the light. The Jesus of this gospel has a more than human knowledge, and a more than human power. He knew Nathaniel while he was still under the fig tree. He knew the past of the Samaritan woman before she told it to him. He knew that Judas would betray him. He knew in advance "all the things that were coming upon him" (18:4).

He did such works as to compel belief in him: changing water into wine, multiplying the food for the great multitude, healing a man blind from birth, and raising Lazarus from the dead. These works are consistently referred to in this gospel as "signs"—signs that Jesus was the unique Son of the Father. Most of the stories of his works close

with a statement that those who know of them believe:

This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples *believed* on him. (2:11)

And from that city many of the Samaritans *believed* on him. (4:39)

So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself *believed*, and his whole house. (4:53)

Once Jesus is reported as asking the bystanders to think of his works as witness to his claims, and once he calls upon them to believe in him for the sake of the works:

For the works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. (5:36)

Though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. (10:38)

One cannot but remark upon the difference between this attitude toward his wonderful works, and that expressed by the Jesus of the synoptics, when he asks the man whom he has healed to "go and tell no man" and is shown as being reluctant to have faith in himself rest upon his deeds of healing.

The Jesus of the Fourth Gospel is always fully in command of his own destiny. He says of his life:

No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. (10:18)

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When his captors come to take him in the garden of Gethsemane, he goes forth to meet them, and it is they, not he, who fall down in consternation.

Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon him went forth, and saith unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When therefore he said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Again therefore he asked them, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way. (18:4-8)

Again, the contrast between this story and that in Mark is striking. Mark brings out the tragedy of Jesus' isolation and suffering by the pregnant phrase "And they all left him, and fled" (Mark 14:50). In John's story Jesus has no need of human support. He is master of the situation even when he is being apprehended. In this gospel, Jesus' death is his "glorification." In his prayer at the last supper, he says:

Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee. (17:1)

In bold contradiction of the synoptic story he goes to his death, bearing his cross for himself. He has already spoken of his death as like the falling of a grain of wheat into the earth.

If it die, it beareth much fruit. (12:24)

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. (12:32)

The tragedy with which the story in Mark is charged is absent here; the tragedy is transformed into triumph.

There is no place in this story for the temptation of Jesus. Neither is there any place for the struggle in Gethsemane. Struggle and suffering do not belong in the experience of this divine, majestic figure. He is above temptation; suffering has no part in him; and death is transcended in his glorification.

Now as we turn to the question of what the gospel teaches about the *religious life of the Christian* we see that it centers in the believer's relationship to Jesus. Throughout the story, Jesus is represented as teaching that he is himself the way by which men come to God.

No one cometh unto the Father, but by me. (14:6)

The "I am" discourses present him as the bread of life, the water of life, the light of the world. He is the Good Shepherd. He is the vine in which the branches must abide in order to derive their life. He is the resurrection. He is the way, the truth, and the life. These discourses carry the central message of the book about the nature of the spiritual life. What the author most wishes to convey to his readers is his deep conviction that there is an experience of God which the Christian may achieve through Jesus, and that that experience is itself *eternal life*:

This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ. (17:3)

This religious experience that he commends is mystical. Jesus prays for his disciples

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that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: (17:21)

that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one. (17:22, 23)

The symbol that he uses for this relationship is that of the branches abiding in the vine.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. (15:4-5)

It is for the sake of making possible this relationship that Jesus' earthly sojourn took place. Those who believe on him may enter into eternal life through him.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. (3:16)

I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. (10:10)

Around this central concept of eternal life are gathered all the teachings of the gospel. This author does not think of eternal life as having merely to do with the duration of existence after death, although he affirms the enduring and abiding nature of such "life."

I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. (11:25-26)

He thinks of its central meaning as having to do with a quality of being. Eternal life is mystical oneness with God which Jesus exemplifies and which is possible to believers through him. It may be a present possession here and now. "This *is* life eternal, that they should know thee." And when one asks, "what is this knowing?" one finds the answer in the gospel's uniting of it with the concepts of love and light and truth. Such knowledge is gained, not merely with one's mind, but with one's whole personality. It consists in having the truth, walking in the light, loving one another.

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (8:32)

I am come, a light into the world. (12:46)

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (13:35)

And in the First Epistle, knowledge of God comes to explicit definition in terms of loving:

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (I John 4:7-8)

Thus the apocalyptic thought of life everlasting is changed into its spiritual equivalent, thereby showing it to be not merely concerned with the persistence of life after death, but with the qualitative aspects of experience.

Likewise the thought of the judgment day is spiritualized. In the Fourth Gospel the judgment is not an event in time to which one looks forward, but it is a process

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going on here and now in the life of men, as they respond to the personality and teaching of Jesus.

This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. (3:19)

Sometimes this new and more spiritual conception seems to be battling with the older and more traditional view of a "last day" of judgment, as in 6:39-40 and 5:25-29, but on the whole, the thought of the gospel moves in the more spacious realms of spiritual values, rather than in the concrete, material concepts of apocalyptic thought.

In this gospel's thought of the *Spirit*, we have one of its finest gifts to Christian theology. Paul had used the concept of the Spirit with great effectiveness, speaking of Christians as living and walking by the Spirit and as having the fruits of the Spirit in their ethical life. It was left for this gospel, however, to identify the second coming of Jesus with the giving of the Spirit, and thus to transform another apocalyptic concept into a spiritual experience. In those beautiful words that this gospel gives to Jesus to speak at the last supper, this is made clear:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you. (16:7)

It is in the questions of Jesus' disciples, as to his meaning, and in his answers to them, that the identification is made of his return with the giving of the Spirit.

Some of his disciples therefore said one to another, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye behold

me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see me?
(16:17)

Already Jesus has asserted that his return was not to be outwardly manifest to the world, but was to be known only to the disciples in an inward way.

Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. (14:19-20)

And this statement is put in close association with the promise of the Spirit.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth. (14:16-17)

Then this promise is followed by the assurance: "I will not leave you desolate," and by the further promise:

If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (14:23)

Thus the second coming becomes really identified with the giving of the Spirit and "the little while" is used as a designation for only the briefest possible interval, merely for Jesus to pass through the gateway of physical death into the fuller experience of the eternal life. When this has been accomplished, he is to be with his disciples in an inward and spiritual relationship which he has called "manifesting himself to them."

These great gifts of creative thought that the gospel has made have meant much to Christians always. We must

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think of them as coming into being as a spiritual leader of the early second century pondered on the problems and difficulties that the church was facing at that time. This transformation of earlier thought was his way of meeting and answering the discouragement and disappointment of that age, because the second coming did not take place. That disappointment is reflected in those pathetic words of the letter of Second Peter in which the opponents of Christianity are quoted as saying:

Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. (II Peter 3:4)

This reinterpretation was the author's way of fusing the practical concrete interests of the historical life of Jesus with the permanent and abiding meaning of that life for the religious experience of men. It was his way of interpreting the religion which centers in Jesus so that it would be intelligible and appealing to the Græco-Roman world. It was his way of bringing a synthesis of the ethical religion that Jesus taught with a conception of his personality that could be the heart of a mystical fellowship with God through him. It was his way of showing to the Greek world how Jew and Gentile, bond and free, could find in Jesus the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

But it was no mere intellectual task to which the author of the Fourth Gospel set his hand. Part of his originality lay in the vital experience of religion which he himself possessed and which he wished to share with his readers. He was creative in the realm of feeling as well as in the field of thought. He had experienced deeply that of which he wrote. He had found in his experience of God through

Jesus such nourishment for his spiritual life, that it defied expression except through symbol. He found the needed symbol in calling Jesus the bread and the water of life. The path of life had been so illumined for him by the teaching of Jesus, that he had truly found in him the light of the world. Life had been profoundly enriched for him in the mystical fellowship with God which he found through Jesus. Hence his own experience was summarized in the words that the gospel gives to Jesus:

I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.
(10:10)

And in Jesus, he felt that life's ultimate mystery had found its solution, and humanity's deepest sorrow its comfort, so that it was true to represent Jesus as saying:

I am the resurrection and the life. (11:25)

Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (14:1-3)

To these great certitudes of his life the writer of the Fourth Gospel gave sublime expression. He wrote simply, using for his profound meanings the commonest, humblest symbols: water, bread, and light. He tells his story of Jesus' life with perfect simplicity, using realistic details of place, and concrete, human material, as he portrays the scenes in which Jesus takes part. And yet he leaves us with the feeling that the deepest truths of human experience have been shared with us. Long ago an early Christian writer, Clement of Alexandria, spoke of this book as

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a "spiritual gospel." Recently Professor Drummond described it as having "a tender and unearthly beauty." And all down the ages men have loved it and have found it answering their spiritual needs in a unique way.

In this gospel has been written one of the great chapters in the world's religious literature. Here one finds a true blending of the inward mystical experience that lies at the heart of religion with its outward manifestation in love. Here is the profound respect for truth that must underlie all great interpretations of religion. Here is a deep understanding of the infinite spiritual meaning of Jesus' personality. All these spiritual values are given expression through an intimate record of Jesus' earthly life, so that the ultimate realities with which the book deals are made apprehensible and warmly personal.

This gospel served a vital need for the time in which it was written in its phrasing of the Christian message in terms that made it appealing to the Greek world. But it has served a much more far-reaching purpose than the meeting of any particular need at any particular time. The author grasped the eternal meaning of the personality of Jesus for the spiritual life of man and in this gospel has given supreme expression to his faith in the sufficiency of that personality as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

CHAPTER XIII

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP FOR THE CHURCHES

FIRST AND SECOND TIMOTHY AND TITUS

In his letter to the church at Corinth Paul spoke of the church as made up of "not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble" (I Cor. 1:26). It is a description that would hold true of churches everywhere and all through the ages. The Christian community has always been made up largely of everyday people,—people not endowed with conspicuous gifts, people who need encouragement and strengthening in the business of making their lives worthy of the gospel of Christ. The rank and file of the Christian church membership have always needed leadership in order to be able, as the author of Titus puts it, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.

As churches multiplied in the latter part of the first century, the problem of developing an adequate leadership of these many local groups became more urgent than it had been at first. In the early days of pioneer missionary activity the evangelists, Peter, Paul, Timothy, Silas, Barnabas, and Philip and others had devoted themselves to a travelling ministry, preaching, teaching, establishing churches, studying the problems of the several groups and helping to solve them. Even in those early days, however, we can see how certain individuals in the local groups accepted responsibility for the ongoing life of the church,

and carried on as leaders in the absence of those who had done the creative work of founding and inspiring the organization. Priscilla and Aquila, first at Corinth, and later at Ephesus, Apollos at Ephesus, Lydia at Philippi, Mnason in Cyprus, Philip the evangelist and his four daughters at Cæsarea, Tychicus at Colossæ or Laodicea, and Philemon at Colossæ are some of these local leaders whom we know by name.

The New Testament letters reveal clearly how much these early local leaders depended upon Paul and other teachers for encouragement, stimulation, and guidance. A good share of the New Testament writings came into being to meet this very need. As the primitive era of beginnings, with its individual, itinerant, unregulated leadership, gradually merged into a more permanent and settled régime, as the pioneer missionaries' creative work of evangelism was superseded by local pastoral service, it became more and more essential to plan for the training of these local leaders. Some of the problems that were incidental to this transition from itinerant evangelistic service to that of local direction we have seen in our examination of the three letters that bear the name of John. The way of progress for the church clearly lay in the direction of developing an adequate local leadership. The church would grow in maturity and strength not through the continuance of the earlier régime, but by making a satisfactory adjustment to its new conditions of life. Something of how this need was met, we are able to see in the letters, First and Second Timothy and Titus.

These letters have come to have the title "the Pastorals" because they were written for this purpose,—to instruct and to sustain those who were to be teachers and pastors

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to the rank and file of the church membership. Since they were addressed to leaders they have a good deal to say about the duties and qualifications of church officers. In pointing out what the content of their teaching should be, the letters also deal quite specifically with the standards of conduct that should prevail among the church members themselves.

All three of these letters have superscriptions which state that they were written by Paul to Titus and to Timothy, but there are many considerations which have led scholars to believe that they cannot be as a whole the work of Paul. These considerations need not be discussed here. It is sufficient merely to suggest that among the most important of them is the fact that the stage of the church's development presupposed by them is not that of Paul's time. These letters reveal a considerably developed organization with differing grades in its leadership,—bishops and deacons. They assume an accepted body of beliefs that is recognized as the content of the Christian faith, when they speak of "the faith" and of "sound doctrine" (I Tim. 1:10, 1:19, 3:9, 4:1, 4:6, 5:8; Titus 2:1). They suggest that a body of sacred writings is now held to be central to Christian teaching:

But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work. (II Tim. 3:14-17)

Again, these letters do not deal with the characteristic ideas of Paul's Christianity, but rather with the external regulation of the life of the church. Careful linguistic studies have shown that the vocabulary and style of these letters are radically different from Paul's. And finally, although the superscriptions would suggest that they are letters from a leader to those so intimate with him that he could speak of one as his "beloved" (II Tim. 1:2) and "true child" (I Tim. 1:2), and of the other as his "true child after a common faith" (Tit. 1:4), there is little that is personal or intimate in the letters themselves. They read, rather, like open letters to the leaders of the churches. The one who speaks in Paul's name finds it necessary to defend Paul's leadership, saying "I speak the truth," "I lie not," when he refers to his appointment as preacher, apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles (I Tim. 2:7).

How then did these letters come to bear the name of Paul and to be issued as his work? The easiest solution would be to say that some one followed the common custom of writing under the name of a great man of the past. Then we should say that some leader at the end of the first century or the beginning of the second accepted this current literary convention and wrote under the name of Paul a message that he felt sure Paul would be giving if he were then alive. To a writer of that period, this method would be as natural and acceptable as it would be for a modern author to choose a pseudonym if it were more to his taste than writing under his own name.

But the problem is not so simple as this solution would indicate. For there are sections in each of these letters that seem too circumstantial, too personal in their treatment of Paul's affairs, too unrelated to their present context, to be

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accounted for in this way. In such passages as the following, Paul himself clearly seems to be speaking:

But thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, patience, persecutions, sufferings; what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: and out of them all the Lord delivered me. (II Tim. 3:10-12)

Give diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering. But Tychicus I sent to Ephesus. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments.

Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord will render to him according to his works: of whom do thou also beware; for he greatly withstood our words. At my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account. But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the house of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth: but Trophimus I left at Miletus sick. Give diligence to come before winter. Eubulus saluteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.

The Lord be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. (II Tim. 4:9-22)

These and other passages like them have given rise to the view that some actual notes of Paul to Timothy and Titus had been preserved and that some later leader, into whose hands they had fallen, used them as the core of his letters, building around them the message that he himself wished to convey to the church in his own day. It is a difficult matter now to be sure as to the exact extent of the Pauline notes, but this problem of dissection of the present letters is not so important for the purposes of this study as to see to what use the combined materials were put.

Let us look at the letters to see what the content of their message is. First of all, one is struck by the fact that here there is no discussion of the thought content of the Christian message. Paul himself was constantly working out with his readers the basic positions of the Christian faith. But here the thought side of the Christian life is taken for granted. The writer often exhorts his readers to hold the "sound doctrine" or to "keep the faith," but he never discusses what the content of that faith is. He is quite severe toward those who have "fallen away from the faith" (I Tim. 4:1), and toward those who "speak lies" (I Tim. 4:2), but he does not say what they have fallen away from, nor what the lies are. He says that "they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm" (I Tim. 1:7). They are "vain talkers" and deceivers (I Tim. 1:7, 10). Their questions are foolish and their talk "profane babblings." They are those "whose mouths must be stopped" because they teach "things that they ought not" (Titus 1:10-12). Then with evident relish he quotes a line of Greek hexameter, said to be from the Cretan poet Epimenides:

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"Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons."
(Titus 1:12)

These denunciations are not directed against particular points of view, but against those who teach anything other than the Christian gospel. Something not explicitly presented here has become "the faith" and "the sound doctrine." One need not discuss its content, nor weigh it in relation to other positions.

Here is the beginning of orthodoxy. The days of the spontaneous, free working of the Spirit have gone. Definition of the content of the Christian gospel has already taken place. The work of the Christian leader is now to guard that which has been committed to him, and not to deny the faith.

One notes, also, in connection with the progress toward orthodoxy of belief that these letters indicate, a corresponding trend toward fixity in the conception of what Christian leadership is. Here are certain duties and certain qualifications for the differing grades of leadership:

The *bishop* therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach; no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have good testimony from them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Deacons in like manner must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy

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lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless.¹

How different this condition of affairs is from the early days of the Christian church, when the gifts of the Spirit were what qualified a man for leadership! Then some taught, some prophesied, some spoke with tongues, according to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Then these gifts fell upon one or upon another as the Spirit willed. In these later days there are clearly understood duties and qualifications for each grade, and one earns one's spurs by a faithful performance of one's clearly defined work.

For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing. (I Tim. 3:13)

If a certain content of doctrine, definite and accepted without argument, has become "the faith," and if leadership is now less a matter of the spontaneous manifestation of a gift of the Spirit, and more a matter of regulation both in preparation and in expression, it is natural that there should be a more conscious acceptance of certain writings as sacred and normative for the life of the Christian. And we have already seen that this is the case.

Abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred

¹ I. Tim. 3:2-10. The advice that is given to elders seems not clearly to be directed to a class of officers. In I Tim. 5:1 especially, the word seems to have its simplest meaning of "older men," as contrasted with the younger. In 5:17 "elders that rule" may refer to a group with official status, but not so clearly so as in the case of bishops and deacons. Up to the third century the word "elder" was used as a general title of respect for older men or for those who had been leaders in a previous generation. Cf. Streeter: *The Primitive Church*, Ch. III.

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writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture is inspired of God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for discipline which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work. (Marginal reading) (II Tim. 3:14-17)

It is, moreover, interesting to note that here for the first time, we have the explicit designation of a word of Jesus as "scripture." Together with the appeal to the authority of Deuteronomy for the adequate payment of leaders, we find a word of Jesus exactly as it is recorded in Luke 10:7. They lie side by side, introduced by the phrase: For the scripture saith:

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his hire. (I Tim. 5:18)

If we feel a touch of regret at the passing of the spontaneity and freshness of Christian experience as it was in the earlier days, we must recall that this tendency to define and regulate the various aspects of the Christian life was an inevitable condition of growth and permanence for the church. Delightful as earlier unregulated experience was, it would be impossible for it to continue through the ages. The church would have been doomed to early death if no definition of the content of Christian faith, no regulation of the conduct of its life had been achieved. This was a necessary task if the ongoing life of the church was to be made secure.

We are consoled, also, for the loss of the earlier spontaneity when we realize the wholesomeness of the general attitude that inspires this regulation. There is no asceti-

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cism here, no discipline that deters from a wholesome participation in life. Marriage is approved for church officers; a moderate use of wine is permitted (I Tim. 3:2, and 5:23). Teachers who advocate ascetic practices are denounced. They are "doctrines of demons" that forbid marriage and command abstention from meats,

which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer. (I Tim. 4:3-5)

This wholesome attitude toward life finds happy expression when the author is guarding his readers against a too great trust in riches:

Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, *who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*. (I Tim. 6:17)

and in the assertion that "to the pure all things are pure" (Titus 1:15). It is indeed a spiritual achievement, that in the necessary development of regulation in the church's life, there was preserved this healthy freedom from any ascetic attitude.

The best of these pastoral letters lies in their practical counsels for the good conduct of life. Not only for leaders, but for those who make up the membership of the churches,—old men and women, younger men, servants, widows,—average individuals are counselled as to what makes one a good Christian. Such practical virtues as providing adequately for one's household, being hospitable to

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strangers, not being idle or too talkative, giving generously to charity, being gentle, modest in dress, and meek, making a good home, not speaking evil of any other person, and yielding obedient honor to rulers, are suggested as ways of expressing the Christian life (Titus 2 and 3). They are good counsels not only for the first century but for the twentieth.

These are not the writings of a great creative spirit. They do not forge new beliefs, nor chart new paths for Christian experience. We cannot even say of them that they are sharing an unusually vigorous personal religious experience. These are rather the writings of one who feels strongly that a great religious tradition is to be conserved. And he knows how to bring that religious tradition within the reach of the average individual. This was his service to the time of transition from the primitive era of beginnings to the time of the great catholic organization of the church. This will be the service of these letters to Christians always. There will always be a great body of "average people," "not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble" and for them the gift that this leader has made in his interpretation of the Christian gospel in terms of everyday "good works" will always be immeasurably great. Forever pertinent to Christian experience will be his appeals to "fight the good fight of the faith" and to "lay hold on the life eternal" (I Tim. 6:12); to accept God's gift of a spirit not "of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline" (II Tim. 1:7); to "suffer hardship . . . as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 2:3) and to present oneself "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

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This leader, who felt so deeply the responsibilities of Christian leadership and understood so well the problems of the average church member, took the method of commending a great tradition and urging that those who accept it sustain it worthily by becoming solid, dependable, responsible members of the Christian community. Thus they would contribute to the solidarity of the church throughout the world and hand on the tradition to those who came after them. His method of taking the notes of Paul and elaborating them for meeting the needs of the Christian community as he knew it half a century after Paul's death is symbolic of the aim that he cherished. He was not such a man as Paul was, able to enter into a religious experience, so deep, so vital, so creative that it could send him out to change the face of history. But he was a man who could accept his religious heritage, appreciate it, and make it available, meaningful, and practically helpful to average people. In his use of those lines that express the summary of the great apostle's work, we have a symbol of this writer's hope to conserve, to make available, to bring about appreciation and appropriation of the abiding values of the Pauline Christian tradition:

I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the course,
I have kept the faith. (II Tim. 4:7)

CHAPTER XIV

DEALING WITH HERESY

JUDE AND SECOND PETER

IN the letters of Paul we have seen how his influence and leadership had to be exerted in order to make some of the Christian group willing to set aside restrictions and regulations that kept Christianity a Jewish sect and allow it to adapt itself to conditions of thought and experience in the Græco-Roman world. One of the greatest contributions that Paul made to the development of Christianity was his making it possible for Gentiles to be at home in the Christian group both in ways of thought and in the practices of worship. This was the purpose and this the fruit of his discussions about the relationship of faith to the Law.

It is interesting to see how completely this situation had been reversed by the end of the New Testament period. The line of progress had been straight toward Hellenistic thought and practice. Christianity had been so flexible, so adaptable to conditions of life in the western world that the problems at the end of the first century and the beginning of the second were those incidental, not to making it acceptable to the Hellenistic world, but to defining it sufficiently so as to give it a distinctive content of thought and a distinctive conduct of life. The process of adaptation had gone so far that now the need was for drawing in and

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defining what the specific character of Christian experience was.

The two books of Jude and Second Peter with which this chapter will deal are indicative of this interest. They are mainly concerned with the problem of heretical teachers who claim to be Christian but who present what the authors of these books believe to be unorthodox views. We have already seen in the Pastoral letters how this tendency to define and make a distinctive pattern for the Christian experience had begun. It was there in suggestions as to an orthodox content of belief, as to accepted qualifications for leaders, and as to the building up of a recognized body of writings that should be its scripture. It is interesting to note how in respect to this latter point, Second Peter treats Paul's letters as already part of the Christian scripture. They must by now have been gathered into a collection for he speaks of "all his epistles," and they are regarded with special reverence, for he says that some misunderstand them as "they do also *the other scriptures*" (II Peter 3:16).

The business of contracting is never so attractive as that of expanding. This period at the beginning of the second century that takes us into the process of controlling Christianity in the interests of orthodoxy does not stir us as does the early period of spontaneous enthusiasm and creative pioneer work. But in the long run the church was served by such work. It needed organization; it needed to define itself as to thought and practice if it were to take its place as a developing movement in the world. Jude and Second Peter which concern themselves with this process are not among the greatest of the New Testament writings. But they are very valuable works to us because

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they reveal so clearly what the interests and problems of the second century were.

These two books must be thought of together because the writer of one considered the other so effective that he drew upon it freely, sometimes verbatim as one sees if one compares Jude with the second chapter of Second Peter. It is generally thought that Jude was the earlier of the two and was taken up almost bodily into Second Peter rather than that Jude abstracted a part of Second Peter. This view is held partly because Jude is the stronger and more vigorous writing, and partly because the attitude toward the false teachers expressed in Jude is more hopeful of their being drawn back into the fold than is the case in Second Peter. Jude says of the recalcitrants:

And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear. (Jude vv. 22, 23)

while Second Peter has no such hope. He feels that the false teachers who "privily bring in destructive heresies" deserve a "swift destruction." These teachers and those who follow them, particularly those who give themselves over to licentious practices, are, he says,

creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed. (II Peter 2:12)

Closely similar, however, as these two books are, it is clear that their purposes are quite distinct from each other. Jude says to his readers at the opening of his letter that he was intending to write to them about the more general and more positive subject of "their common salvation," but "was constrained to write" exhorting that they "con-

tend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). The letter bears out this purpose throughout. The author does not define clearly the type of heresy that he is attacking, but several allusions suggest Gnosticism. When he refers to those who turn "the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (v. 4) and who walk "after their lusts and their mouth speaketh great swelling words" (v. 16) it seems that he has in mind a certain group of Gnostics who laid great stress on esoteric knowledge, felt freed by its possession to disregard the moral conduct of life, and hence were notorious for licentious practices.

Jude seems to be almost carried away by his own eloquence as he writes of the destructive work of these teachers. He piles up metaphors to ease his heart of feeling against them:

These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever. (vv. 12-13)

Indignation and not solicitude speaks in these denunciatory lines. When Paul had a similar situation to deal with, his usual practice was to discuss the positions taken by those whose teachings were different from his own, and to point out the errors in the views themselves (*Cf.* Gal. 3-5). But this writer only hints at the erroneous views, and uses all his strength in denouncing the people who hold them. Furthermore, there was always with Paul

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a mixture of tenderness with his reproof of wrong attitudes. He was always the true pastor, with something fatherly in his regard for those whom he had to reprove. Even when he was severe, he could still be loving. There is not a trace of tenderness in Jude, except at the end of the letter where the hope is expressed that some may be snatched out of the fire. This is the writer's hope for some, but it is small in comparison with the despair that he feels for the false teachers as a whole.

The purpose of Second Peter is a different one. He takes his turn at denouncing the false teachers but this is incidental to another concern he has on his heart, namely that of confirming a particular position of the Christian faith, the hope for the second coming of Christ. Perhaps this author knew how the writer of the Fourth Gospel had urged a translation of this hope into its spiritual equivalent, the belief in the indwelling presence of Jesus in the hearts of his believers. But this author could not believe that this was the right way to look at it. He believed that the faith in Jesus' actual return to earth was the very heart of the Christian gospel, and should be cherished no matter how much the passage of time seemed to spell its defeat. We have already in an earlier chapter referred to the wistful note in his quotation of the critics of Christianity to whom he refers as mockers, who say:

Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. (II Peter 3:4)

Day after day passes, he acknowledges, and the long expected event does not happen. One can imagine how tenaciously he would cling to his hope, how ardently he

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would cherish it as its long deferred fulfillment made other hearts relinquish it. He charges his readers:

Forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God? (II Peter 3:8-12)

In this injunction, he calls upon Paul as one authority, using Paul's very words about the day coming as a thief, and upon the current Stoic doctrine of an end of the world in fire.

Such appeal to disparate authority suggests another similarity between Jude and Second Peter. Both of them are catholic in their assimilation of current views, at the same time that both make a strong appeal for orthodoxy, —a combination of opposites that was somewhat typical of the Chrisitan movement as a whole at the time these writings were born. Christianity had been flexible and adaptive to the thought of the Græco-Roman world. This was one of the secrets of its rapid growth at a time when many religious sects flourished but few approached this one in power. But the very success that the movement had achieved had led to the necessity for definition of the

content of its faith. Jude refers to this content of doctrine as "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude v. 3). The author of Second Peter says that it is part of his duty to put his readers in remembrance of the things which they already know and through which they "are established in the truth" (II Peter 1:12). This is their appeal to orthodoxy, but both are eager also to make the most of such current thinking as will serve them. Old Testament material, Paul, Stoic thinking and late Jewish apocryphal traditions are all called upon to support the appeals of these writers (II Peter 3:6 and Jude vv. 6, 9, 14, etc.). In this very process which combines the preservation of a certain deposit of orthodoxy with the assimilation of what is useful from late Jewish and Græco-Roman patterns of thought, the Christian movement was strengthening itself for its triumphant march down the centuries.

It is interesting to note, however, in these books which have so much to say against the false teachers, that there is nothing that deals with the great positions of the Christian faith. The incarnation, the nature of salvation, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the experiences of prayer and of Christian fellowship do not come in for discussion here. Paul had been the creative spirit in laying the foundation for a Christian theology. The author of Hebrews and the author of the Fourth Gospel had each made a significant contribution to the content of Christian thought. But these later writers of Jude and Second Peter were content to accept that "faith once for all delivered to the saints," and to assume that no further discussion of it was necessary. It was left for the apologists in the next stage of Christian development to take up the great positions of faith, to expound, interpret, and defend them.

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We have little light upon the question of the authorship of these two works. Early interpreters liked to identify "Jude a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" with the Judas mentioned in Mark 6:3:

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?

or with the Judas mentioned as an apostle in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13. But the content of the letter indicates a later age than the lifetime of these men, and the attitude toward the apostles of Jesus expressed in Jude seems clearly to forbid any such identification:

But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. (v. 17)

We know the author of Jude only through this work, except for the fact that he bore the common name of Jude and had a brother who bore the even commoner name of James.¹

In the case of Second Peter the situation is somewhat different. The author had the definite intention of having his letter thought of as the work of Peter, the apostle of Jesus. He refers to being present at Jesus' transfiguration, and to the scene recorded in John 21 (II Peter 1:16-18 and 1:14). He makes reference to the first epistle of Peter as if it were his own (II Peter 3:1), and in general writes claiming the authority of Peter.

¹ It is possible that the original text did not contain the word "brother" but read rather "Judas of James," in which case the meaning would be Judas the son of James.

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Our consideration of the contents of the letter, however, and of the time in the church's development which it clearly presupposes forbids our thinking of it as coming from Peter's hand. What we have here is a definitely pseudonymous work. The custom of taking a great name under which to write was very common in both Jewish and Christian circles. It seems strange to us in a day when copyright laws and conceptions of literary integrity protect the author's right to his own work. But in the second century no such ideas prevailed. It was an accepted custom to gain authority and sanction for one's work in just this way. As in the case of Jude, we have our only knowledge of the author of Second Peter through one work which came to have a place in the New Testament collection.

As we come to the estimate of these two works, we cannot but feel that they are chiefly valuable as documents that reveal the situation of the church at the end of the New Testament period. Their writers were not marking out new trails for the church to take. They were not creative in thought nor highly inspirational for Christian experience. They represent the tendency to take a stand for orthodoxy and to point out as reprehensible those who were false to the best Christian tradition. As records of history they are priceless. As works of inspiration for Christian thinking or living they take a secondary place. They cannot be ranked with the great constructive work of Paul, or of the author of Hebrews, or of the author of the Gospel of John.

But while we cannot take these writings as a whole as having the classic quality that some of the New Testament

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works possess, we must not pass over some exquisite passages that they contain. The benediction with which the book of Jude closes is noble in thought and full of poetic feeling:

Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and forevermore. Amen.

Second Peter's call to the ascending scale of virtue makes a permanent epitome of the moral side of the Christian life:

adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love. (II Peter 1:5-7)

The summary of his hope for the return of Jesus has become a symbolic expression of the abiding Christian hope for and faith in a community of justice and love which will be the kingdom of God on earth:

We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (II Peter 3:13)

These two short works bring us to the end of the New Testament period. Their meaning is best seen when they are thought of in their relation to the whole collection. Not greatly creative in themselves, they still mark a step

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in the development of the church and testify to certain directions that Christian thought was taking. It will now be our task in the concluding chapter to gain a conception of the integral character of the New Testament.

CHAPTER XV

THE CHRISTIAN EPIC

THERE is something of the nature of epic in the literary achievement of the early Christian community. Any new religion has heroic quality in its experience which, if it finds expression in writing, creates literature in heroic mold. Here at the source was the transcendent creative personality of Jesus. In him was a moral grandeur that transcended every finite limitation. His insights plumbed the depths of human life, and transcended its highest ideals. Here was the tragic death that was to become a universal symbol of self-giving, sacrificial love. About him centered the hope and the faith that such a life could not be holden by death. Because of him, other lives were transformed and empowered; other lives were enabled through him to lay hold on the life eternal. A world-changing personality lay at the heart of the New Testament writings.

There is epic quality also in the community that followed Jesus. Fisherman, tax-gatherers, publicans and sinners, Samaritans, outcasts gathered about him. From one to another the word was passed that here was a personality in whom one found the life that was life indeed. At his death this community became stronger rather than weaker. The heroic quality of life that was in the founder became the possession of the group. Like the irresistible

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tide that wave by wave encompasses the sand on the beach, so this movement took its triumphant course, proof against doubt, against argument, against opposition. Jewish councils could not successfully condemn its leaders, nor Roman prisons hold them. Evangelists defied hardship and danger to make its messages known in every corner of the Empire. Death did not silence their message, nor persecution weaken it. This movement had about it a quality of life that was to overcome the world.

In the New Testament the transformation from the creative personality of the founder to the stable embodiment in the fully organized church found living expression. These writings, in their dealing with the material of great beginnings, in the imaginative power of their portrayal both of the personality of Jesus and of the life that came to pass because of him, in their increasing domination of the thought of men in all the centuries following have the qualities of epic literature. Out of the passion of religious conviction, out of a consuming devotion to the personality of Jesus and the community that arose because of faith in him, out of the sense of power that came through the possession of the Spirit, a literature was born that was to have a central place in the thought and experience of all later ages.

If one asks why the writings of this one century, from the middle of the first to the middle of the second of the Christian era, should have such classic quality that even in the twentieth we go back to them as the source of our inspiration and the spring of our hope, there is no answer to that question in precise terms. The only answer that can be suggested is in the general recognition that the ages of faith are always the ages of creative power. Pioneer

experience is always vital experience. Spiritual beginnings are bound up with deep convictions, and deep convictions are the stuff of which great literature is made. Periods of exploration in faith, just as in the world of geographical discovery, have about them a quality of adventure, of courage, of abandon that it is never possible fully to recapture in the periods when a more settled and organized life is appropriating and living upon the fruits of that discovery.

So it is that in this first century of Christian literary expression there were in the life of the Christian church the conditions requisite for the making of great literature—heroic abandon to a cause, passionate feeling about that cause, an uncalculating devotion to its interests, and a transcendent joy in its possession. Such an experience was bound to find poetic symbol for its expression because what it had to say defied expression in literal modes of speech. It would inevitably seek great variety of expression because the experience itself was many-sided, and rich with a diversity of gifts. It would secure for itself depth and breadth of expression because those who wrote were persuaded that their faith transcended height and depth, life and death, things present and things to come. In both their personal lives and their sense of solidarity as a community they felt that they were “more than conquerors” through Christ. In the very nature of life these heights and depths could never be so fully experienced again as they were in the time of origins. This is the secret behind that profoundly true statement of Frederick Clarke Prescott in his *Poetry and Myth* that the Bible is a greater book on religion than could conceivably be written in our modern age.¹ And we may justly add: this is why the

¹ P. 187.

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New Testament is a more truly epic presentation of the Christian gospel than could conceivably be written in any age other than the period of beginnings.

The bulk of the New Testament writings is small. It is the smallest collection of sacred scripture in the world. But in this slender collection what variety of richness is found! In these few documents—gospel, chronicle, epistle, homily, and apocalypse—we have the many-sidedness of Christian experience bodied forth. Here the Christian gospel is interpreted in terms of ethics, there in terms of theology, again as worship, and yet again as inward mystical oneness with God. One of these writers saw in Jesus the unique Son of God, who came in power to do wonderful deeds; another saw in him the fulfillment of the Messianic hopes of the Hebrew faith; and another wrote of him as the compassionate friend of outcasts and sinners. In one writer's thought Jesus had become the living Christ, an indwelling presence making of the Christian "a new creature." In another's he was our Great High Priest who entered once for all into the mediating experience of sacrifice. One saw him as the Great Shepherd of the sheep; another saw him as the mediator of life and light,—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. One saw the Christian life fulfilled in visiting the fatherless and the widows; another saw it as being faithful unto death in time of persecution. One interpreted it as laying hold on eternal values through faith and thus belonging to the succession of saints, prophets, and martyrs. One knew that it meant breaking down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, Scythian, bondman, and free. Another saw it as a deepening and an intensifying of the religious fellowship within the beloved community. Still

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another saw its completion in the heavenly city where sorrow and sighing are no more.

Amid all this variety of interpretation and emphasis, we perceive, however, a unity that binds these works together. They belong together by reason of something much deeper than the decrees of church councils that later made them an accepted canon of scripture. They belong together because, in spite of all differences, they participate in a common deep religious experience. That experience is described by one as a finding of the truth; for another it provided a new standard of life; to others it meant inward renewal that gave power or peace. In its richest expressions it united all of these values. And they are all found in Jesus Christ. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. More profound than its differences of interpretation, lies this unity of a common experience which dominates the New Testament. Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, is revealed here the universal Saviour of mankind.

This fruitful combination of diversity and unity in the New Testament is paralleled by its paradoxical possession of both intensive pertinence to its own age and timeless meaning for all the ages. We have seen how truly this literature has waited upon life; in how real a sense these writings came into being to meet definite needs in special localities at given times. Some were written to make it possible for the new wine of the gospel to burst the old bottles of racial or national exclusiveness; some were written to hold back the process of adaptation from a too great inclusiveness. Some were written for Corinth; some for Ephesus; some for Asia Minor; some for Rome. Special problems had to be dealt with. The needs of given

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churches had to be met. The New Testament belonged to its own time, and answered the needs of its own age.

But at the same time it stands above its own age—these special situations, and these local needs. It has about it the timelessness that all great literature must in some degree possess. History shows it taking on new meanings as it lives in the life of men in the successive ages of the Christian church. The truth of its insights into the unchanging aspects of man's spiritual life has kept it forever representative of the inner meanings of human experience, forever shedding light upon human relationships, forever capable of giving to life fresh and vital meaning. There has never been a time in the history of the church when these writings have not been pertinent to the lives of Christians.

Speaking of the gospels in his *Life and I*, Gamaliel Bradford tells of how he made the adventure of reading the gospels after years of not reading the Bible at all. He says of them:

Above all there is the heavenly sweetness, the ineffable, profound spiritual insight, which without making a shadow of pretence, seems to go to the bottom of the world. . . . There is the expression of love and tenderness, of infinite pity and comfort, which the world has never seen equalled and never will, which has brought relief and hope to those who seemed to be utterly beyond the reach of them. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And millions of weary hearts have listened, and forever cast out fear. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." . . . How many who

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have fought the long battle and fainted in triumph or in defeat have found in those words the consolation that triumph could not yield them and that defeat could never take away.²

In D. S. Merejkowski's *Jesus the Unknown* there is a paragraph headed: "The New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. Translated into Russian. St. Petersburg, 1890" which reads:

A small book in 32mo, 626 double-column pages of small print, bound in black leather, which, according to the '1902' inscribed on the title-page, has, in this year 1932, been in my possession for thirty years. I read it daily, and shall continue to read it so long as my eyes can see, and by every kind of light, by rays coming from the sun or from the heart, on brightest days and in blackest night, happy or unhappy, sick or well, full of faith or of doubt, full of feeling or devoid of feeling. And it seems to me that there is always something new in what I read, something unfathomed, and that I shall never plumb its depths or reach its end.³

Here in the twentieth century are two vital testimonies, one from a Russian, and one from a New England American, to the inexhaustible depths and riches of this little collection,—a bundle of letters, a group of four stories of the Master, a short chronicle of the early church, a sermon or two, and a Christian apocalypse. Numberless other testimonies could be added to these, but we need not assemble them. These writings have evoked a like feeling in countless men in all the generations of Christians from

² Pp. 168-9. By permission Houghton Mifflin Company.

³ P. 18.

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the second century until now,—many of them less articulate than these two,—men wise and foolish, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, learned and simple, old and young. Through these profound, luminous, deeply searching interpretations of the spiritual meanings of life, generations of men have found themselves empowered to lay hold on the life eternal, to realize their sonship to God, and to feel that in even the darkest and most tragic of experiences, they have an “anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast.” Such is the history of the New Testament, a history of ever-renewed and ever-renewing life in the religious experience of Christians. Such is the quality in it that makes it truly “the Christian Epic.”

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